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ABSTRACT

The rates of exclusion among pupils in the 450 primary, secondary, and special schools in the Birmingham (England) local education agency were studied, and data were analyzed by sex, age, school sector, and ethnic group. The attitudes of teachers and administrators were studied through interviews with up to five school staff members in each of six case study schools with low or decreasing exclusion rates. A sample of students in each case study school completed a questionnaire about their understandings of discipline, student-teacher relationships, and student participation in decision making. Some strategies schools might adopt to reduce exclusion rates overall and the disproportionate exclusion of African Caribbean students were identified. The minimal use of exclusions in the case study schools was not due to a "no exclusions" policy, but rather to comprehensive policies the schools had developed on behavior, pastoral care of students, and the development of an intensive curriculum. Four of the schools had strategies for reducing exclusions among the overrepresented groups. Students in these schools indicated that they understood discipline policies and that relations between students and teachers in their schools were generally good. A number of initiatives were identified that local education agencies could use to reduce exclusions overall. An appendix contains ethnic data on permanent exclusions. (Contains 7 tables, 4 figures, and 68 references.) (SLD)

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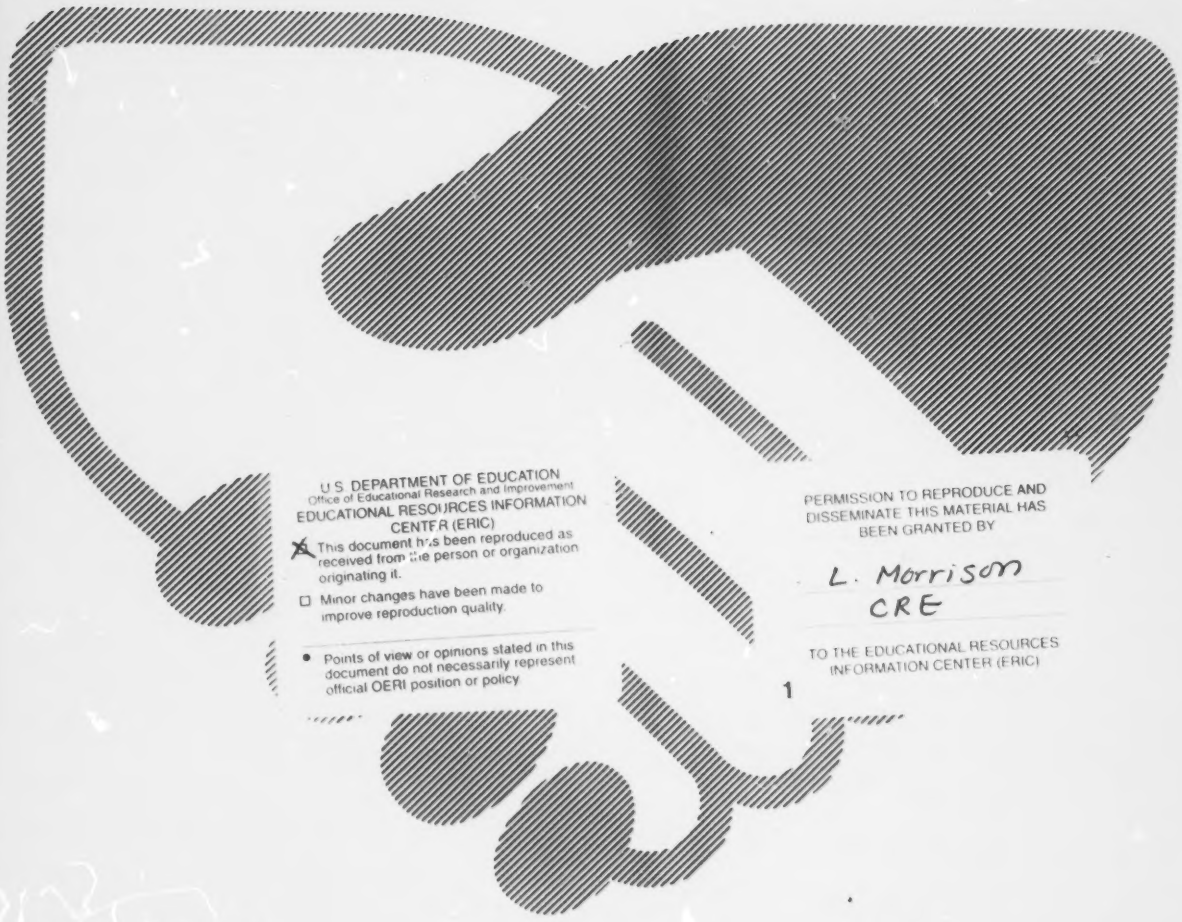
EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL AND RACIAL EQUALITY

A report for the Commission for Racial Equality

by Dr Audrey Osler, School of Education,

University of Birmingham



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EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL AND RACIAL EQUALITY

RESEARCH REPORT

A report for the Commission
for Racial Equality,
by Dr Audrey Osler,
School of Education,
University of Birmingham

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CONTENTS

	Tables and Figures	4
	Acknowledgements	5
1	Introduction	7
2	The exclusion issue: background	17
3	Characteristics of excluded pupils	22
4	Patterns of exclusion in one LEA: a statistical analysis	29
5	Good practice at school level	36
6	Pupils' perceptions of school discipline	53
7	Good practice at LEA level	60
8	Conclusions	66
9	Good practice recommendations	68
	Appendix 1 Ethnic data on permanent exclusions, 1994/5	77
	Bibliography	81

TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES

4.1	Ethnic composition of Birmingham pupils, 1995	30
4.2	Permanently excluded pupils, by ethnic group and sex, Birmingham 1995	30
4.3	Permanently excluded pupils, by ethnic group, Birmingham 1990/1-1995/6	31
4.4	Reasons for permanent exclusion, by ethnic group Birmingham, 1990-95	32
4.5	Excluded pupils on schools' special needs registers, Birmingham, summer term 1996	33
4.6	Secondary schools, by trend in exclusion numbers, Birmingham, 1991-93 to 1994-96	34
4.7	Change in number of exclusions in Birmingham secondary schools with decreased exclusions, by ethnic group	34

FIGURES

4.1	Trends in permanent exclusions, Birmingham, 1990/1-1995/6	31
4.2	Primary and secondary school exclusions, 1994/5	31
4.3	Reasons for permanent exclusion, by ethnic group, 1990-95	33
5.1	Can permanent exclusion be avoided? Checklist for schools	52

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report seeks to identify good practice at both school and local education authority levels which might reduce the number of excluded pupils generally, and particularly address the current disproportionately high representation of African Caribbean pupils among those excluded from school.

Although there was much media interest in school discipline and on specific cases of pupil exclusion during the research period, the overrepresentation of African Caribbean pupils in the exclusion statistics did not, generally speaking, form part of the public debate. Our research began in June 1996 and lasted for six months. It was directed by the School of Education at the University of Birmingham in partnership with Birmingham Local Education Authority.

The aims of the research were:

- To compare and contrast rates of exclusion among pupils in the 450 primary, secondary and special schools in Birmingham LEA and analyse the data by sex, age, school sector and ethnic group.
- To elicit the views of primary and secondary headteachers and teachers on policy and practice relating to exclusion in schools with low or declining exclusion rates.
- To elicit the views of LEA officers and support service staff concerning good practice in relation to exclusion.
- To explore pupils' understandings of discipline and related matters in primary and secondary schools with low or declining exclusion rates.
- To identify strategies which might be adopted by schools and LEAs to reduce their exclusion rates, and particularly to reduce the disproportionate representation of African Caribbean pupils among those excluded from school.
- To examine recent national patterns relating to exclusion of pupils from school through an examination of the relevant literature.

Structure of the report

Each chapter focuses on a specific aspect of the research; findings from the literature and from our empirical research are integrated throughout the report. This chapter provides a brief background to

the project, some details about the research methods adopted and a profile of each of the case study schools. Chapter 2 focuses on the broader national context and on conclusions reached by other researchers. Chapter 3 discusses what we know about excluded pupils from the literature available and from previous research; it thus provides additional background material. Chapter 4 focuses on Birmingham, an LEA with large numbers of pupils from black and ethnic minority communities, and examines trends and patterns in exclusions over the past five years, drawing on statistical data. Chapter 5 presents our data from the six case study schools, examining teachers' and headteachers' understandings of issues relating to discipline generally and to exclusion in particular. It discusses good practice in relation to exclusions at school level. Chapter 6 sets out the responses we obtained on pupils' understandings of discipline and related matters. Chapter 7 examines good practice at LEA level, drawing on the experiences of headteachers, LEA officers and others involved in support services. Finally, Chapter 8 draws together the research findings and presents policy and good practice recommendations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to identify what might be considered 'good practice' in relation to school exclusions, we collected and analysed three types of information. These were:

- statistics on fixed term and permanent exclusions in Birmingham LEA for the period 1990-1996.
- interviews with key officers and support staff dealing with pupil exclusions in three West Midlands LEAs, and informal discussions with staff in other LEAs.
- case studies of six schools from two West Midlands LEAs which were actively addressing the issue of exclusions and which had low or declining exclusion rates.

Statistical analysis of fixed term and permanent exclusions

One of our aims in analysing the statistical data available on fixed term and permanent exclusions was to establish the relationship between the two types of sanction. We particularly wished to establish if, and to what extent, the statistics on permanent exclusions might form the tip of an iceberg, disguising a greater problem of pupils kept out of school by fixed term exclusions.

We wished to examine, both by sex and ethnic group, which pupils within the LEA were being excluded, and identify any trends in the patterns of exclusion. We also wanted to identify any

differences according to sex and/or ethnic group in the reasons given for excluding pupils, and to check for any relationship between excluded pupils and those identified as having special educational needs. Finally, we wished to consider differences between exclusion rates for different schools.

Birmingham LEA had collected data from schools on fixed term exclusions, although schools are not required to identify them in the data they supply to the Department for Education and Employment. However, the statistics they had were incomplete and inconsistent, and it seemed that some schools were under-reporting these. We were therefore unable to draw any clear conclusions about the use of fixed term exclusion.

Selection of the case study schools

This involved identifying schools with similar pupil populations but significant differences in rates of exclusion. Schools with low exclusion records could then be studied to identify the strategies they used to deal with disciplinary problems.

Six case study schools with low or declining exclusion rates were selected. Four of our case study schools were in Birmingham LEA, three secondary and one primary. Birmingham LEA is the largest metropolitan LEA in England and Wales, and has the largest number of ethnic minority pupils. The other two schools were from another West Midlands urban LEA with a substantial ethnic minority population, and were chosen in consultation with the LEA officers responsible for exclusions and equal opportunities. One was a secondary, selected from a list of schools actively addressing the issue of pupil exclusion; the other was a primary school. All six schools were co-educational and had ethnic minority pupils.

Interviews with key LEA officers and support staff

As well as seeking to identify good practice strategies used by schools to manage pupil behaviour, we wanted to examine how LEAs might provide effective support systems to help schools keep down the number of pupils excluded from school. We were interested in support that can be offered to schools when pupils are identified as vulnerable to exclusion, rather than support for pupils who are out of school as the result of exclusion. We interviewed personnel from Birmingham LEA and other West Midlands authorities.

Case study schools: teacher interviews and pupil questionnaires

Our aim was to understand teachers' attitudes and approaches to exclusion and equal opportunities. We also examined the schools'

policies on discipline, behaviour and other aspects of pupil management, equal opportunities, and special educational needs. We tried to establish whether individual teachers felt supported in managing difficult or challenging pupil behaviour.

In each case study school, we interviewed up to five members of staff. These included the headteacher; another senior staff member, usually a deputy head; a head of year or key stage or other staff member with responsibility for the pupils' pastoral welfare; and a relatively inexperienced member of staff, normally a newly qualified teacher. We tried to include someone with responsibility for equal opportunities or community relations. Interviews with teachers were recorded and transcribed for analysis.

In each school, we also asked a sample of pupils to complete a questionnaire which explored their understandings of discipline, pupil-teacher relationships and pupil participation in decision-making. In primary schools this was done by a class of Year 6 children, and in secondary schools by a group in Year 9 and/or 10.

THE CASE STUDY SCHOOLS

SCHOOL A

Type: 11-18 mixed comprehensive with about 800 pupils on roll.

Location: Birmingham LEA. A large local authority housing estate not far from the city boundaries, in an area of considerable physical deprivation and high levels of noise pollution. Most pupils came from the immediate neighbourhood of the school where the unemployment rate was over 16%. Half were eligible for free school meals.

Admissions: In the last five years the school roll had been rising. The school had become popular in the area, with admissions at 96% of capacity.

Achievement: In 1996, just under 80% of pupils achieved five or more A-G grades at GCSE, in line with the LEA average. The number of pupils achieving five or more higher grade GCSEs had been improving. In 1994, it was around 11%, less than half the LEA average; it more than doubled in 1995. In 1996, 20% achieved five or more A-C grades (13% below the LEA average). The school had a very small sixth form.

Special Educational Needs: Over 100 pupils were identified as having special needs, but very few of these had assessment statements.

Exclusions: In 1994/5, there were three permanent exclusions, all of white boys. Between 1990 and 1995, only eight pupils were permanently excluded.

Ethnic composition

Black (African and Caribbean)	3%
Bangladeshi	0%
Indian	1%
Pakistani	4%
White	83%
Other	9%

SCHOOL B

Type: 11-18 mixed comprehensive, which described itself as a community school.

Location: Close to the city centre and easily accessible by public transport. Other LEA.

Admissions: About 720 pupils on roll. As pupil places were available in most year groups, the school had accepted a number of pupils who had been excluded from other schools.

Achievement: In 1996, 20% of pupils achieved five or more A-C grades at A level, about 15% lower than the LEA average. Around 70% of pupils achieved five or more A-G grades at GCSE, 10% below LEA average. There was a small sixth-form of under 20 pupils.

Special Educational Needs: 200 pupils, of whom less than 10% had statements.

Exclusions: The number of recent permanent exclusions was relatively high. Two pupils were permanently excluded in the 1994/95 academic year. The new headteacher and senior management team had set out to reduce exclusions through new strategies for managing pupil behaviour. The Head has recently called meetings of all interested parties, including parents, community representatives and LEA officers, to help the school address this problem.

Ethnic composition: As returns from parents were below 20%, we did not have accurate details of the schools' ethnic profile. The following figures are therefore estimates:

Black	<4%
Indian / Pakistani	>10%
Other Asian	>4%
White	<80%
Other	<4%

SCHOOL C

Type: Mixed comprehensive 11-16 school, which opened in September 1996 on the site of a former school. The current headteacher had been appointed to lead the newly formed school. About half the present staff were from the former school and the rest new. Advisers and governors had noted improvements in pupils behaviour, which had declined during the last two years of the former school's existence. As the school was in the process of development there were few written policies.

Location: Birmingham LEA. Most pupils lived within a two-mile radius of the school. It was in an inner-city regeneration area, which consisted largely of local authority housing. The headteacher described the socio-economic status of the pupils as 'very poor', and unemployment in the area was nearly 30%. More than three out of five pupils were eligible for free school meals.

Admissions: 550 pupils on roll, of whom three-fifths were boys. Admissions were currently just over 50% of capacity.

Achievement: In 1996, 15% of the pupils at the former school left with five or more A-C grades at GCSE (just under half LEA average) and 75% of pupils achieved five or more A-G grades at GCSE, slightly below LEA average. Over the period 1991-95, the number of pupils achieving grades A-C at GCSE had improved considerably, rising to nearly 28% in 1995, above the LEA average for that year.

Special Educational Needs: About 90 pupils were identified as having special educational needs, of whom about one-third had statements.

Exclusions: 10 pupils were permanently excluded from the former school in 1994/5, of whom six were white (five boys and one girl), two were Asian (boys) and two (a boy and a girl) were classified as 'Other'. Between 1990 and 1995, there had been 29 excluded pupils.

Ethnic composition:

Black	15%
Bangladeshi	12%
Indian	2%
Pakistani	23%
White	45%
Other	3%

SCHOOL D

Type: 11-16 mixed comprehensive, which described itself as a community school.

Location: On a large outer-city council housing estate. Unemployment in the area was just over 14%, and two out of five pupils were eligible for free school meals. Birmingham LEA.

Admissions: 650 pupils on roll. Over the past five years the school had experienced a declining school roll and was at 70% of capacity.

Achievements: In 1996, around 15% of pupils achieved five or more A-C grades at GCSE, which was under half the city average but results had shown a steady improvement. Over 80% of pupils achieved five or more A-G grades at GCSE, slightly above LEA average. .

Special Educational Needs: Around 110 pupils were identified as having special educational needs.

Exclusions: In 1994/5, there were three permanent exclusions. Two were white (a boy and a girl); one was a black boy. Between 1990 and 1995, a total of 20 pupils had been excluded.

Ethnic composition:

Black	6.5%
Bangladeshi	0.1%
Indian	0.6%
Pakistani	0.6%
White	88.0%
Other	4.2%

SCHOOL E

Type: A primary school with a nursery. The school prided itself on its community links and on working with parents.

Location: An inner city area dominated by nineteenth century terraced housing and heavy industry. Unemployment in the area was over 25%, and nearly three out of five pupils were entitled to free school meals. Birmingham LEA.

Admissions: Just under 250 pupils on roll. Pupil turnover was relatively high at 33%, more than twice the city average.

Special Educational Needs: Over 50 pupils had been identified as having special educational needs, but only two had statements.

Exclusions: No permanent exclusions during the past five years.

Ethnic composition:

Black	38.0%
Bangladeshi	1.5%
Indian	20.0%
Pakistani	15.0%
White	17.0%
Other	8.5%

SCHOOL F

Type: A primary school with a nursery.

Location: An inner city area of terraced housing. Most of the children came from the immediate neighbourhood. Other LEA.

Admissions: About 400 pupils on roll, including those in the nursery. There was a relatively high pupil turnover.

Special Educational Needs: About 90 pupils were identified as having special educational needs, but just three had statements.

Exclusions: The school had excluded two pupils, both white boys, in the last five years. It had accepted a number of pupils permanently excluded from other LEA schools.

Ethnic composition:

Black	1.9%
Bangladeshi	1.2%
Indian	12.7%
Pakistani	1.0%
White	78.0%
Other	5.2%

2 THE EXCLUSION ISSUE: BACKGROUND

This chapter reviews recent data on exclusions, setting this research project within the national context. While there is firm evidence of an overall rise in the number of exclusions in the period 1990-95, it is clear that the official statistics do not present the full picture, and that different methods of defining and recording exclusions have made it difficult to make comparisons between LEAs. All the available evidence suggests that the official statistics offer a conservative estimate of the actual numbers of pupils excluded from schools.

Government policy on exclusion

Circular 10/94 affirms: 'Unless other suitable arrangements are made, all children should be in school and learning. Exclusion should be used sparingly in response to serious breaches of school policy and law' (DfE 1994). It defines two permissible forms of exclusion from school: 'fixed term', which allows schools to exclude a pupil for a limited period, up to a maximum of 15 school days in any term; and 'permanent', after following clear procedures involving the headteacher, governing body, parents, pupil and LEA. The 1997 Education Act has extended the maximum duration for fixed term exclusions to 45 days. Fixed term exclusions are made with the intention that the pupil will return to the school from which he or she was excluded. Permanent exclusions are made with the intention that the pupil will not return to the school from which he or she was excluded, although this decision may be overturned on appeal. Schools are required by statute to supply information on permanent exclusions to the LEA and Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), but they are not required to supply records of fixed term exclusions.

The rise in exclusions

During the early 1990s, a series of national surveys was carried out to establish the number of exclusions from schools. All except one (SHA 1992) showed an increase in the number of exclusions. The first was by the Department for Education (1992). It was followed by others commissioned by teacher unions (NUT 1992; SHA 1992), concerned individuals and organisations (Stirling 1992; ACE 1992 and 1993; Garner 1993; Bourne *et al* 1994), the media (MORI 1993 for BBC Panorama), and government bodies (OFSTED 1993; DfE 1993 and 1994; Parsons *et al* 1995).

The total number of permanent exclusions in England in 1993/4 was estimated at 11,181 by a research team from Christ Church College (Parsons *et al* 1995) using figures obtained from 101 of the 109 LEAs in England and Wales. This was, they reported, a threefold increase over the DfE figure for 1991/2 exclusions. The increase between 1990/1 and 1991/2 had been 32% and that for the two year period 1991-93 was 70%. The DfEE has since reported a total of 10,648 exclusions for 1994/5 (DfEE 1996), suggesting that a plateau may have been reached.

The increasing use of exclusions nationally has been confirmed by local studies in various parts of the country. Lloyd-Smith (1993) observed that 'in most LEAs the rise has been steady and this reflects an existing trend rather than a new phenomenon.'

In Sheffield, there were 48 permanent exclusions in 1988, rising to 54 in 1989, and 89 in 1990; while in Avon, according to statistics from Bristol Racial Equality Council, exclusions rose from 1,178 in 1986/7 to 1,888 in 1991/2 (Bourne *et al* 1994). In Birmingham, a local newspaper report linked the 1993/4 increase in exclusions, from 249 to 295 (13.5%), to an increase in poverty levels (*Birmingham Evening Mail*, 3 Nov 1994).

This general upward trend seemed to apply equally across the various categories of exclusion. A study in one large LEA found that fixed term exclusions had nearly doubled over three years, 'indefinite' exclusions had risen threefold, and there had been a 50% increase in permanent exclusions (Imich 1994). A 1994 survey of Birmingham LEA secondary schools also found that all types of exclusion were increasing, and suggested that for a number of pupils permanent exclusion had followed several fixed term exclusions (Birmingham City Council 1994).

In 1994, legislation abolished 'indefinite' exclusions but the overall picture does not seem to have greatly changed. The abolition of the 'indefinite' category does not appear to have further inflated the number of permanent exclusions. Instead 'indefinite' exclusions appear to have been absorbed into fixed term exclusions. According to Rowbotham 1995, in the previous three years, the levels of both permanent and fixed term exclusions had grown by around 13% nationwide.

Although most exclusions take place in secondary schools, there is also evidence that the number of exclusions in primary schools has been rising. The 1993 OFSTED report, *Education for Disaffected Pupils*, based on inspections in ten LEAs between 1990 and 1992, found a steady rise in exclusions in most LEAs and a 'notable increase' in the number of primary school children being excluded. In 1994/5 there were 1,365 permanent exclusions from primary schools (DfEE 1996).

Although this was just 0.03% of the primary school population, it amounted to 12.3% of permanently excluded pupils.

In a disturbing article, a school governor claimed that in a primary school for 5-9 year-olds:

> Prior to Autumn 1990, permanent exclusion was unheard of, indefinite exclusion rare and fixed term exclusions tended to be the last disciplinary resort. During the last 18 months, however, fixed term exclusion has become commonplace and indefinite exclusions have increased significantly and are always a prelude to permanent exclusions. (ACE 1992b)

Special schools have also seen a rise in excluded pupils. Research in one metropolitan LEA noted a 'marked increase in exclusions from special schools, particularly schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties' (Stirling 1994). The author cited one school which had excluded six children, the equivalent of a whole class, permanently but unofficially. In 1994-96, the number of children permanently excluded from special schools was 522 or 0.54% of the entire special school population. These exclusions from special schools amounted to 4.71% of all permanently excluded pupils during this period (DfEE 1966).

There are enormous variations between the different sets of figures that are provided on pupil exclusions. Bourne *et al* (1994) quoted the DfE national statistics – 3,000 permanent exclusions in 1990/1 and 3,822 permanent exclusions in 1991/2. Yet the National Union of Teachers (1992) estimated national annual exclusions at around 25,000, an increase of 20% over the previous year.

There are three main reasons for these discrepancies: different definitions, incomplete data and unofficial exclusions. As Bourne *et al* (1994) pointed out: 'The reason why figures on exclusions seem to fluctuate wildly is because, very often, different definitions and methods of monitoring are used.'

Inconsistent definitions

One problem is that some figures refer to all recorded exclusions, some only to permanent exclusions. Imich (1994) expresses concern about lack of consistency in classifying 'exclusion'. Citing the NUT (1992) and MORI (1993) surveys as lumping all types of exclusion together, Imich argues that 'such data does not present an accurate picture of what is actually happening'. Lloyd-Smith (1993) also talks about the difficulties of establishing accurate figures because of 'inconsistent definitions'.

As well as different definitions of 'exclusion', much of the data available on the ethnicity of excluded pupils use different ethnic classifications. For example, in an article discussing exclusions in

Birmingham, Mayet (1993), using the ethnic breakdown adopted by the LEA at that time, found that 56% of excluded pupils were white, 32% African Caribbean and 21% Asian. She suggested that pupils of 'mixed race' might be included in the African Caribbean figures, but acknowledged that she was not sure.

Similarly, Bourne *et al* (1994) quoted figures from various LEAs to illustrate the disproportionate number of black pupils excluded. Their examples included Sheffield in 1990, where African Caribbean pupils formed 2% of the school population and 6.7% of excluded pupils; Birmingham in 1990/1, where 'black' pupils formed 9% of the school population and 31% of permanent exclusions; Wolverhampton (no date) where African Caribbean boys formed 6% of the school population and 12% of all secondary exclusions; and Nottingham in 1991, where African Caribbean pupils were five times as likely as white pupils to be excluded and where, between September 1989 and April 1990, one quarter of pupils suspended from secondary schools were black.

While these figures serve to demonstrate that ethnic minority pupils were being disproportionately excluded from school, they are not useful for comparative purposes for the following reasons: 'black' may or may not include children of mixed descent; some of the statistics refer to all schools, others to secondary schools alone; some refer to 'pupils' and others to boys only.

Incomplete data

The second reason for inconsistencies between the figures available is that in many cases the data are incomplete. Lloyd-Smith (1993) talks about 'the failure of some schools to submit the information requested'. Bourne *et al* (1994) say that: 'It is also very clear that all official statistics are gross underestimates of the real situation.' They go on to suggest that schools do not always fill in the required nine-page questionnaire on each permanently excluded pupil, and that LEAs may not wish to be seen as high excluders.

However, since January 1996, the old voluntary system of recording exclusions has been replaced by a requirement for all schools to inform the DfEE of the number of pupils permanently excluded in a school year, as part of the annual Schools' Census.

Unofficial or informal exclusions

The Advisory Centre for Education (1993) observes that the statistics available on exclusion do not include 'the hidden numbers of children who have not been formally excluded but who are out of school because they have clearly been rejected by their schools'. Gillborn

(1995) also makes the point that the figures available are only for official exclusions, and claims: 'It is well known that some students and/or their parents are pressured into "volunteering" to leave a school's roll.'

It is possible to identify two types of exclusion which do not show up on the figures. It has been suggested that such exclusions might increase the official statistics twenty-fold (Bourne *et al* 1994).

'Unofficial' exclusions occur while the child remains officially a pupil within a school. For instance, children may be sent out of lessons, or to sit in a corridor or with a senior teacher, or be isolated during the lunch break, or sent home for the rest of the day. Where this amounts to a cumulative pattern it can mean missing out on a substantial amount of teaching.

'Informal' exclusions occur when parents are encouraged to remove their child from a school. One type of informal exclusion, the extent of which is difficult to estimate, is where 'schools give parents the opportunity to avoid their child being formally expelled and instead encourage parents to find an alternative school before a formal expulsion is made' (Mayet 1993). A report by OFSTED (1996) on exclusions from secondary schools noted that 'the practice seems to be growing of "inviting" parents to find another school, in lieu of exclusion.' The report notes that in such cases there is no provision for funding to follow the pupil, and the receiving school will not have adequate information about the child before admission.

One LEA working party on exclusions suggested that as many as 4,800 pupils or 8% of the school population 'may be excluded from school either on a fixed term basis or permanently, or be absent for long periods of time other than for health reasons' (Birmingham City Council 1994). A researcher who has done much work on unofficial and informal exclusions argues that the official figures are 'the tip of the iceberg' and only reflect the information that schools and LEAs are willing to provide, revealing 'only a small proportion of the total number of pupils who have been excluded and who may never attend school again' (Stirling 1994). She cites cases of informal exclusions disguised as medical problems (for example, a boy absent for a whole term with influenza), or schools persuading parents to keep children at home 'while the school approaches the LEA to make special provision'. Such exclusions, she notes, mean that the school continues to receive payment for these children while they are left without entitlement to an alternative school.

3 CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCLUDED PUPILS

While it is generally agreed that African Caribbean pupils are over-represented in the exclusion statistics, this has attracted relatively little official attention, and the guidance schools have been offered has not addressed the issue of racism in school and society and its potential impact on the educational opportunities of ethnic minority pupils.

While ethnicity, sex, socio-economic status and special educational needs can all affect a child's chances of being excluded from school, it seems from the research evidence that the biggest factor influencing the likelihood of exclusion may be the particular school she or he attends.

Children being looked after by a local authority also appear to be particularly vulnerable to exclusion, particularly unofficial exclusion.

Ethnicity

Although there is overwhelming agreement that there are significant differences between the rates of exclusion for different ethnic groups, the public debate about exclusion has paid little attention to concerns within ethnic minority, and particularly black, communities that their children are overrepresented in the exclusion statistics. Analysis by the Department for Education showed that African Caribbean pupils made up 8.1% of exclusions in 1990/1 and 8.5% in 1991/2, while the 1991 census showed that 'Black Caribbean' people formed just 1% of the overall population (DfE 1993).

As will become evident when we examine the new data gathered during this project, many black parents and educators are concerned about official neglect of this issue, and would agree with Bourne *et al* (1994) that there has been 'absolute silence from the government on why black children are being disproportionately excluded, despite evidence from many concerned groups and individuals on the subject'.

An analysis of phone calls to the Advisory Centre for Education on the subject of exclusions in the same months of 1988, 1990 and 1991 not only showed a 'quite astonishing' rise in calls from people concerned about the exclusion of a child, but also that in 1990 and 1991 around half these calls were about black children (ACE 1992).

Statistics from Nottingham confirm the disproportionately high numbers of African Caribbean pupils being excluded: in 1989/90, 25% of school exclusions were of black pupils, although just 6% of all

pupils were black (African, Caribbean and other). This meant that, 'in less than a full academic year, more than one in ten of Nottingham's black students were involved in exclusion procedures' (Gillborn, 1995). Gillborn notes that in official DfE publications on exclusions the issue of 'race' is either absent altogether or this overrepresentation is dealt with in a couple of sentences advising heads to 'ensure they apply disciplinary procedures objectively and consistently across all ethnic groups'. (DfE 1993b)

A recent OFSTED report on exclusions from secondary school notes that 'an increasing number of LEAs are aware of and concerned about the disproportionate numbers of ethnic minority pupils, in particular boys of Caribbean and African heritage (but increasingly also boys of Pakistani heritage), being excluded'. (OFSTED 1996) It highlights that when the ethnicity of excluded children was monitored, some schools were surprised to realise the large number of black pupils they were excluding.

The OFSTED report also notes that the case histories of excluded Caribbean children differed markedly from those of their white peers, with racial abuse a factor in one case. However, despite making recommendations for training teachers in the pastoral care of pupils, and providing guidance on behavioural management and curriculum modification to meet individual needs, neither OFSTED nor the DfEE has issued any specific guidance on dealing with racial harassment or on the need for more general monitoring to ensure equal access. Issues of racial equality remain marginal to the official agenda.

There is general agreement among researchers that African Caribbean pupils are overrepresented among exclusions from school, although the extent to which this has been monitored varies considerably. In a case study of four LEAs, only one analysed statistics on exclusions by ethnicity; these showed that African Caribbean boys were overrepresented by between seven and eight times their proportion in the school population. (Hayden and Lawrence 1995)

A lot of the research confirms the DfE's figure of African Caribbean pupils being overrepresented by a factor of four. Stirling (1993a) found in her research in one metropolitan LEA that over 40% of excluded pupils were African Caribbean, out of less than 10% of the pupil population. Klein (1996a) also refers to disproportionate exclusions of African Caribbean boys, who formed 8-9% of the pupil population but 40% of the exclusions.

However, the most recent DfEE figures, for 1994/5, indicate that although 'Black Caribbean' pupils account for only 1.1% of the school population they form 7.3% of those permanently excluded – they are about seven times more likely to be excluded than white pupils. (DfEE 1996)

The situation for other ethnic groups, particularly pupils of mixed descent, is less clear. A questionnaire sent to 46 LEAs found that only 15 could supply data on exclusions by ethnicity. Where data were available, they showed that white and Asian pupils were underrepresented but African Caribbean and 'mixed race/other' pupils were overrepresented by a factor of three. (Hayden and Lawrence 1995)

Referring back to a 1985 CRE report on Birmingham, Lloyd Smith (1993) argues that the overrepresentation of African Caribbean pupils it found continues. He claims that 88% of complaints about exclusions brought by black parents to the Community Relations Council in Birmingham during 1990/1 related to fixed term or indefinite exclusions, and that 80% of them related to schools with a low proportion (less than 20%) of black pupils. Over half the exclusions, he says, concerned 'violence against persons or property' and 'in all but two of these the violence had been a response to racial abuse'.

The high representation of African Caribbean pupils among those excluded from school not only raises concerns about the immediate effects of exclusion on the pupils and their access to examinations, but also wider questions about the quality of pastoral care experienced by other pupils of African Caribbean descent. (Nehaul 1996)

Sex

OFSTED (1996) notes that, although girls of all ethnic groups are less likely than boys to be expelled, black girls are as overrepresented among all excluded girls as black boys are among all excluded boys.

The DfE (1993) found that boys were four times as likely as girls to be excluded from school in 1990/1, and five times as likely in 1991/2. Similarly, Parsons *et al* (1995) report the sex ratio of secondary school permanent exclusions to be 4.5 boys to each girl in 1993/4. The most recent official statistics show the ratio to be 4.3 boys for each excluded girl. (DfEE 1996) A questionnaire sent to LEAs found that 90% of primary school exclusions were of boys. This agreed with data from four case study LEAs (Hayden and Lawrence 1995), where the ratio of boys to girls excluded from primary school was 9:1. According to DfEE (1996) statistics, in 1994/5 permanent exclusions from primary schools were 13 times higher for boys than for girls.

Age

A number of sources give the peak age for exclusions as 15 (DfE 1993, Lloyd-Smith 1993, Garner 1993). Parsons and Howlett (1995) report that 45% of permanent exclusions are from Years 10 and 11. Similarly, an OFSTED report into 112 case studies of exclusion found that more than half were in Years 9 and 10, with most of the others

distributed evenly between Years 8 and 11, and very few in Year 7.

Sassoon (1992a) also claims that most excluded pupils are in Years 10 and 11. At this stage, he points out, it is difficult to find places in alternative schools which allow pupils to pursue the same options and GCSE courses. In recognition of these difficulties, Garner (1993) suggests that schools could be 'required to make a formal commitment to educate all students to compulsory leaving age once they have reached, say, 14 years', arguing that they should not 'abdicate their responsibilities'.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

There is some debate about the extent to which pupils with special educational needs (SEN) figure among excluded pupils. This partly reflects problems and discrepancies in identifying pupils with special needs. Blyth and Milner (1994) cite Stirling (1992) as suggesting that schools may exclude pupils because it is quicker than the long process of assessing them for special needs and drawing up an official 'statement' of those needs. Other writers have suggested that pupils are sometimes excluded because they have special needs which are not being recognised or addressed. (Charlton and David 1993) Such unassessed pupils will not, of course, show up in the statistics as having SEN.

Official figures suggest that 12.5% in 1990/1 and 15% in 1991/2 of excluded pupils were identified as having SEN (DfE 1993); other research has indicated that the proportion may be higher. ACE (1992a) found that a high proportion of exclusions were of children with SEN. In another study (Hayden and Lawrence 1995), a quarter of LEAs felt there was a clear connection between exclusion and special educational needs, especially for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), although most 'were unsure about the extent to which exclusion might be a special needs issue.' They also found, in their case study LEAs, that among excluded pupils nearly half (43%) had statements of special needs or were in the process of being assessed, mainly for EBD.

There is certainly evidence that exclusion is often linked to poor acquisition of basic skills, particularly literacy. According to a recent OFSTED report, however, African Caribbean pupils tend not to fall into this general pattern of excluded pupils, being more likely to be of average or above average ability, although their school may judge them to be achieving below their full potential (OFSTED 1996).

The 1996 OFSTED report on exclusions from secondary schools found that excluded African Caribbean children tended to be relatively successful at school; it noted that the case histories of excluded 'Caribbean' pupils differed markedly from those of their excluded

peers: 'their disruptive behaviour did not usually date from early in their school career, nor was it obviously associated with deep-seated trauma as with many of the white children'. Other research has suggested that teachers expect African Caribbean children to present more behavioural problems than other groups (Gillborn and Gipps 1996).

Research on the impact of the 1988 Education Reform Act on the education of children with EBD concluded that referrals to special schools from mainstream schools have increased, and that children with EBD 'are becoming increasingly marginalised' (Stirling 1991). In a later article about the effect of local management of special schools, the same writer claims that market forces are being introduced into special schools, and that her research in one metropolitan LEA indicated a 'marked increase in exclusions from special schools, particularly schools for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties' (Stirling 1994).

The issue of inadequate resources to meet the needs of statemented pupils was raised in a newspaper report on an increase in exclusions from primary school; it quoted Graham Lane of Manchester LEA as saying the authority needed an extra £2 million to meet the identified special educational needs of pupils in the city (*The Guardian*, 31 January 1995). The article also made links between poverty and behavioural difficulties.

A CRE formal investigation documents the need for clear SEN assessment procedures that take account of children's different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and ensure their families are involved in and understand the assessment (CRE 1996).

Assessment of whether misbehaviour stems from special educational need should be a regular procedure before permanent exclusion is considered.

Children looked after by social services

There is evidence that children looked after by local authorities are overrepresented among excluded pupils (Maginnis 1993, cited in Blyth and Milner 1994; OFSTED 1996). Research into seven children's homes revealed that 32 of the 60 children in the sample were not attending school regularly, although only two had been permanently excluded from school: 'the remainder appeared to be on either indefinite or unofficial exclusion' (Stirling, 1992).

Ethnic minority children, particularly of African Caribbean and mixed race parentage, have been found to be overrepresented among children being looked after by social services (Barn *et al* 1997). Research on the extent to which this may be a factor in their overrepresentation among excluded pupils would be useful.

Socio-economic factors

Other factors relating to family circumstances and socio-economic background have been linked to exclusion from school. For instance, Birmingham Chief Education Officer Tim Brighouse was quoted as saying that the rising number of exclusions 'is a very worrying trend which may be the result of a combination of factors, including larger numbers of children in families living below the official poverty line' (*Birmingham Evening Mail*, 3 November 1994). This correlation may also be a factor in the racial disproportion in exclusions, as it is well documented that ethnic minorities tend to live in poorer areas and experience higher unemployment and lower income levels (Peach 1996, CRE 1997).

A study of excluded pupils found evidence that most of their families were involved with social services (over one-third) or other agencies such as education welfare, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and child and family guidance. Rowbotham (1995) found some correlation between exclusions and entitlement to free school meals, but he says, 'it has to be admitted that the methodology is thin.' Hayden and Lawrence (1995) also found some correlation between the number of pupils having free school meals and the number of exclusions in a school, but noted that 'some schools with a very high level of social disadvantage do have a very low level of exclusion, and vice versa.' Rowbotham (1995) also found that some schools with a high level of deprivation have a low exclusion rate, and concludes that successful behaviour management is 'a matter of ethos, policy and management.' Blyth and Milner (1994) argue that 'it is highly likely that both school processes and contextual factors relating to the social and economic environment in which schools operate have their part to play in the levels of exclusion in individual schools.'

School attended

One researcher concludes that 'the probability of a pupil being excluded, and the type of exclusion given, is more dependent on the school the pupil attends than on the offence the pupil commits' (Newton 1994). It is generally recognised that there is wide variation between the rates of exclusion from different schools (DfE 1992; SHA 1992; ACE 1993; Imich 1994; Newton 1994; Parffrey 1994; Lang 1995; OFSTED 1996). Mihill (1995) calculated that one-quarter of the schools were responsible for three-quarters of the expulsions.

There is also a perception that grant-maintained schools have a higher rate of exclusion than LEA schools, although few statistics are available to confirm or refute this. Mayet (1993) claimed that 'one grant-maintained school, praised regularly by the DfE, has excluded

27 children over the last three years,' and pointed out that the LEA had had to find places for these pupils. Macleod (1995) reported that the Association of Metropolitan Authorities 'accused grant-maintained schools of avoiding pupils with special needs and moderate learning difficulties and carrying out covert selection.' SHA (1992) also emphasised that independent and grant-maintained schools were reluctant to take pupils who had been excluded.

As well as variations between schools, there is considerable variation in rates of exclusion among LEAs of the same type (Hayden and Lawrence 1995), with exclusion rates in some LEAs ten times higher than in others. Parsons and Howlett (1995) argued that 'this variation is much greater than can be explained by the socio-economic characteristics of the area.' Parsons *et al* (1995) added that 'In London, the highest rates of exclusion are almost double those found in other areas of the country; in four London LEAs, more than one in 100 secondary pupils were excluded.'

4 PATTERNS OF EXCLUSION IN ONE LEA: A STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Exclusion statistics for Birmingham from 1991 to 1996 were analysed to answer the following questions:

- How many pupils are excluded from schools in Birmingham?
- What are the trends over the past five years?
- Are there differences in exclusion rates by pupils' age, ethnic group, sex or school attended?
- What are the reasons for pupils being excluded?
- Have any schools managed to reduce the number of pupils excluded, and if so, has this been equally effective for all pupils?

Schools are required to supply records of permanent exclusions to the LEA, which is responsible for providing alternative schooling for excluded pupils and for administering appeals against exclusions. Schools in Birmingham are also asked to supply the LEA with details of each fixed term exclusion, but as this is not a statutory requirement, the information provided is sometimes incomplete. Fixed term exclusion statistics have been used in our analysis only when it has been possible to validate the data.

Initially, the ethnic group classification used by Birmingham LEA for exclusion statistics was limited to White, African Caribbean, Asian and 'other' groups. This classification has now been extended to include a more detailed breakdown of the Asian group (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi), and 'Mixed Race' has been added. However, to enable trends to be examined, it has been necessary to use the original four groupings.

Trends in permanent and fixed term exclusions

The trend in permanent exclusions from Birmingham primary and secondary schools from 1991 to 1996 is shown in Figure 4.1. Over this period, the number of permanent exclusions increased by 68% , from 227 in 1991 to 382 in 1996. Most permanent exclusions (86%) were from secondary schools.

As Figure 4.2 shows, permanent exclusions were just a small proportion of the total number of pupil exclusions reported to the LEA. Overall, 88% of the 2,982 pupils excluded from secondary schools

Figure 4.1
Trends in permanent exclusions, Birmingham, 1990/1-1995/6

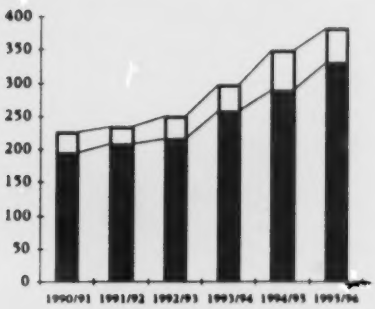
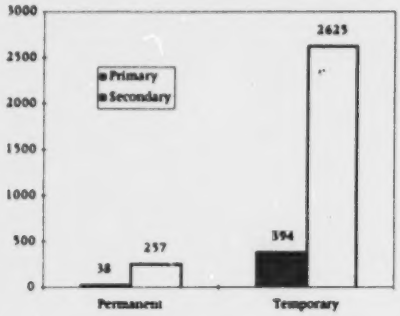


Figure 4.2
Primary and secondary school exclusions, Birmingham, 1994/5



during the 1994/95 academic year, and 92% of the 432 pupils excluded from primary schools, were temporarily excluded for a fixed term only. During the 1994/95 academic year, 4.5% of secondary school pupils and 0.4% of primary school pupils were excluded at least once.

Characteristics of excluded pupils

In order to compare the proportions of pupils from different ethnic groups in the exclusion statistics, we need to know the proportion of pupils from each ethnic group on the school rolls. This is shown in Table 4.1, for both primary and secondary age pupils.

The ethnicity and sex of pupils permanently excluded is shown in Table 4.2, compared with the proportion of pupils from each ethnic group in the school population. It shows that boys are significantly overrepresented in the exclusion statistics compared to girls. African Caribbean pupils are also overrepresented, forming 28% of all excluded pupils, but just 8% of the school age population. By contrast, Asian pupils are underrepresented, forming 12% of excluded pupils, compared with 29% of the school age population.

Table 4.1. Ethnic composition of Birmingham pupils, 1995

	Primary	Secondary
African/Caribbean	8%	8%
Pakistani	16%	19%
Indian	7%	9%
Bangladeshi	3%	3%
Mixed race	3%	2%
Other	2%	2%
White	61%	57%

Table 4.2. Permanently excluded pupils, by ethnic group and sex, Birmingham, 1995

	As % of excluded pupils			As % of school population
	Boys	Girls	Total	
White	45%	6%	51%	58%
African Caribbean	22%	6%	28%	8%
Asian	11%	1%	12%	29%
Other	7%	2%	9%	5%
Total	85%	15%	100%	100%

Table 4.3 shows that the proportion of excluded pupils from each ethnic group between 1990/1 and 1995/6 remained fairly constant over this period except in 1990/1, when the proportion of white pupils excluded was higher, at 58%, and the proportion of African Caribbean pupils was lower, at 22%.

Reasons for exclusion

Reasons for exclusion are shown in Figure 4.3 and Table 4.4. These cover all permanent exclusions during the five years 1991-95, broken down by ethnic group and sex. They show that the most common reasons for exclusion were disrupting lessons or disobeying teachers (37% of excluded pupils), followed by violence to other pupils and fighting (30% of pupils). There were comparatively few instances of violence against members of staff (5%).

Analysis by ethnic group finds only small variations. The proportion of white pupils excluded for disrupting lessons or disobeying teachers was slightly higher than for African Caribbean and Asian pupils, while African Caribbean and Asian pupils were slightly more likely than white pupils to have been excluded for violence to other pupils or fighting. Nor were there significant differences between boys and girls in the reasons for exclusions.

Table 4.3. Permanently excluded pupils, by ethnic group, Birmingham, 1990/1-1995/6

	1990/1	1991/2	1992/3	1993/4	1994/5	1995/6
White	58%	52%	50%	52%	50%	49%
African Caribbean	22%	28%	29%	28%	29%	27%
Asian	12%	2%	14%	11%	14%	14%
Other	8%	8%	7%	9%	7%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total excluded	(227)	(235)	(249)	(297)	(327)	(382)

Table 4.4. Reasons for permanent exclusion, by ethnic group, Birmingham, 1990-95

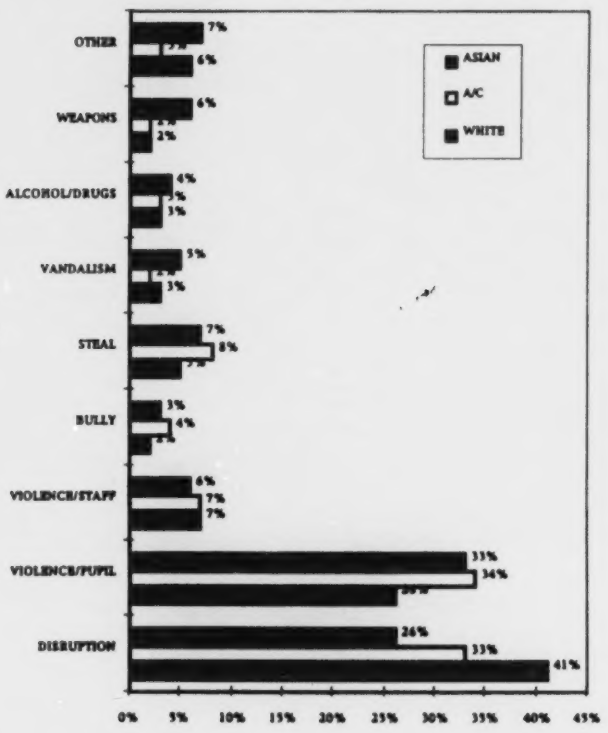
	White		African Caribbean		Asian		Mixed		Other		Total	
	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G	B	G
Physical violence to staff	7	4	7	8	6		5		2		6	5
Physical violence to other pupils	25	28	32	46	33		29	31	39		29	
Disrupting lessons/ disobeying	40	46	34	30	26		41	43	37		37	39
Swearing/verbal abuse at teachers	5	5	3	5	2		6	3	3		4	4
Bullying other pupils	2	1	4	1	3		4	3	4		3	1
Racist comments/ harassment	1											
Stealing	6	3	9	4	7		6	9	3		7	6
Damage to property/vandalism	3	1	2	1	5		1		3		3	1
Alcohol/drugs in school	2	9	3	2	4		3	6	5		4	5
Possessing offensive weapon	2		2	2	6		3		2		2	1
Setting off fire alarm												
Cigarette smoking												
Other	6	3	3	1	7		3	5	2		4	2

Overall, the statistics suggest that pupils from all ethnic groups are excluded for similar reasons, with no group discriminated against by being excluded for 'lesser offences.' However, more detailed analysis of the behaviour leading to exclusion is needed to confirm this; for example, 'disrupting lessons' could cover very different interpretations of disruptive behaviour.

Exclusion and special educational need

It has been suggested (eg, Norwich 1994, Parffrey 1994) that in some schools, children may be excluded when what they need is assessment and provision for special educational needs. Analysis of permanent exclusions from Birmingham schools in the summer term of 1996 showed that 40% of those excluded were on the school's special needs register. As Table 4.5 shows, most had been assessed to Stage 3 of the DfEE's Code of Practice assessmen: process. These figures, of course, do not include pupils who may have special needs which have gone unassessed.

Figure 4.3. Reasons for exclusion, by ethnic group, Birmingham, 1990-95



Collection and analysis of data on assessment, SEN support, and exclusion statistics in relation to ethnicity are needed. It is likely that schools with low proportions of children assessed as having special needs, both overall and from any particular ethnic groups, may not be picking up pupils in need of SEN support. Where this correlates with high exclusion rates, there is reason to suspect that neglected learning difficulties may lie behind at least some of the disciplinary problems.

Table 4.5. Excluded pupils on schools' special needs registers, Birmingham, summer term 1996

Stage of assessment procedure	Number	%
Stage 1	1	1
Stage 2	5	5
Stage 3	26	27
Stage 4	1	1
Statemented	6	6
Total	39	40

Table 4.6. Secondary schools, by trend in exclusion numbers, Birmingham, 1991-93 to 1994-96

	No. of Schools (%)	Average no. of pupil excluded, 1991-93	Average no. of pupils excluded, 1994-96
Increase in exclusions	42 (57%)	7	12
No change in exclusions	7 (10%)	4	4
Decrease in exclusions	24 (33%)	11	7
Total	73 (100%)	8	10

Ethnicity and reducing exclusions

In order to identify schools that had reduced the number of pupils permanently excluded, we compared exclusions per school during the three year period 1991-93 with the number of exclusions during the three years 1994-96.

As Table 4.6 shows, of the 73 secondary schools in Birmingham, 24 (33%) showed a reduction in the number of pupils excluded over this period, from an average of 11 per school to an average of seven per school.

Table 4.7 shows that those secondary schools which had reduced their use of exclusions had, overall, cut exclusions by nearly half for all ethnic groups. This suggests that where schools had introduced policies for reducing exclusions, these were equally effective for all pupils. However, this still left black pupils overrepresented among exclusions from these schools, so strategies which specifically address the needs of these children are important.

Table 4.7. Changes in number of exclusions in secondary schools with decreased exclusions, by ethnic group, Birmingham, 1991-93 to 1994-96

Ethnic group	No. of. pupils excluded 1991-93	No. of pupils excluded 1994- 96	Change (%)
White	127	72	- 43%
African Caribbean	71	40	- 44%
Asian	48	24	- 50%
Other	32	15	- 53%
Total	278	151	- 47%

Because African Caribbean pupils formed 28% of excluded pupils in Birmingham but only 8% of the Birmingham school population, we checked whether this was because they were overrepresented in schools with high exclusion rates.

A total of 14 schools with high exclusion rates, that is schools which had excluded 30 or more pupils in the six year period 1991-96, were identified (two of them grant-maintained schools). Eleven of these had an African Caribbean pupil population of 8% or less. The other three had higher proportions of African Caribbean children than for the city as a whole, ranging from 11% to 33%. Indeed, in one grant-maintained school, over the six years 1991-96, half of the 30 pupils excluded were African Caribbean, though African Caribbean pupils formed only 3% of the school population. However, in this group of schools, the proportion of excluded African Caribbean pupils was 27%, comparable with 28% over the city as a whole.

The fact that ethnic disparities remained, even in schools which had reduced exclusions overall, suggests that for the LEA simply to target schools with high exclusion rates would have little impact on the disproportionate number of African Caribbean pupils excluded.

Conclusions

Analysis of the statistics on exclusions from Birmingham schools showed an overall increase in the number of pupils excluded in recent years, from 227 in 1990/1 to 382 in 1995/6, in line with national trends. We found, however, that while exclusions had increased in some schools, other schools had been able to stabilise or reduce their use of exclusion. Schools which had been effective in reducing the numbers excluded had been equally successful for all groups. African Caribbean pupils therefore continued to be overrepresented.

The statistical evidence does not throw much light on why African Caribbean pupils, particularly boys, are more likely to be excluded than their white peers. More qualitative research is needed at school level to establish how schools are applying the sanction of exclusion to different ethnic groups.

The next chapter examines schools with declining or low exclusion rates, in order to identify good practice which might help to reduce the disproportionate exclusion of African Caribbean boys.

5 GOOD PRACTICE AT SCHOOL LEVEL

This chapter draws on individual interviews with a sample of teachers from each case study school (see p11-14). The interviews explored teachers' and headteachers' understandings of issues relating to school discipline, and their attitudes and approaches to pupil management, equal opportunities and exclusion. We also examined school policies on behaviour, special educational needs and equal opportunities. The chapter also draws on responses from a sample of pupils in each case study school on their understandings of school discipline, pupil-teacher relationships and related matters.

Effects of national curriculum and educational reforms

Teachers and headteachers in the six case study schools were not asked about the impact of recent educational reforms. But as they reflected on issues relating to pupil behaviour and their own attitudes to excluding pupils, they referred frequently to the impact on school discipline of market forces, increased teacher workloads, changed parental expectations, and how the national curriculum had limited the scope for schools to meet individual needs and address pupils' personal and social behaviour.

The teachers interviewed in this study broadly agreed with writers such as Charlton and David (1993), Blyth and Milner (1994), Hevey (1994) and Hayden and Lawrence (1995) that increased competition between schools for pupils and resources was the most important reason for the general rise in exclusions. As Parffrey (1994) puts it:

> Naughty children are bad news in the market economy. No one wants them. They are bad for the image of the school, they are bad for the league tables, they are difficult and time-consuming, they upset and stress the teachers.

Our interviewees felt that in many schools the additional pressures placed on teachers were reducing their capacity to cope with children with behavioural difficulties. In schools with relatively low exclusion rates such as theirs, however, the increased pressures were being borne as increased teacher stress and fatigue.

Many teachers in this study, particularly primary teachers with responsibility for the whole curriculum, believed that the national curriculum had led schools to accept a narrower view of education, and agreed that 'it has diminished the importance of personal and

social education' (Gray *et al* 1994). They argued that opportunities to develop pupils' understanding of social and moral issues, and to consider their own responsibilities towards each other and the school community, had been reduced by pressures on teachers to fulfil statutory curriculum requirements.

They also indicated that curriculum pressures and increased record-keeping left them 'with reduced time and often even fewer reserves of patience to deal sympathetically with the disruptive child in their midst' (Bridges 1994), and with little time to develop materials for children with special educational needs. This in turn could leave such children frustrated, leading to disruptive behaviour if they were unable to succeed in the tasks set for them. Bridges argues that teachers are now more likely to send a child out of class or to a senior member of staff, which starts up a kind of conveyor belt towards exclusion. Searle (1994) repeats Bridges' theory that pressure on teachers contributes to rising exclusion rates.

Headteachers and senior staff interviewed indicated that they were having to resist such tendencies in their schools. They indicated that these pressures, allied to difficulties children might experience out of school and to their feeling that schooling may not help them find future work, were having an impact even at primary level:

> We're into the second generation of children whose parents haven't worked. A lot of the original reasons why people toed the line aren't there any longer and I think that a lot of the children in our school are living in situations where there doesn't seem an awful lot of point [to education]. Everyone wants to achieve in some form, but I feel at home and at school they are not seeing opportunities for themselves as individuals. Some of the traditional motivations aren't there. So we've got to look at alternatives. Where we become negative it's because of tiredness, it's because of workload, it's because of the amount of curriculum we have to cover. We've lost sight of keeping it interesting. (Teacher, Primary School F).

Some teachers also argued that pressures to meet the demands of the national curriculum had led to teachers often failing to consider how the content of lessons related to particular children's experiences. Examples relevant to pupils' cultural backgrounds may not be sought out, leading some children to feel they are neglected or marginalised, and making them more likely to become disaffected:

> The overrepresentation of Afro-Caribbean boys [among those excluded] is a very complicated issue, but I think expectations make a big difference, and I think we do tend, however well intentioned, to see a black boy and think they are going to be trouble. A lot of this is down to the curriculum. One of the problems is that after a long period of dependency [on national curriculum requirements] a whole generation of new teachers has come into schools without the grounding of making decisions about what is appropriate. We have a great responsibility and we're trying to do this ourselves – to incorporate studies, resources that reflect areas of interest, countries of interest to the black children within the school. And I have

> seen the faces – although we don't have many Afro-Caribbean children at our school, those that we do have react so positively if a book is read that has a central character they can empathise with. (Deputy Head, Primary School F).

Some teachers raised doubts about whether it was possible to develop an inclusive curriculum within a very prescriptive national curriculum. It is therefore encouraging to note that the *Exclusions from Secondary Schools* report from the Government's national schools inspectorate, OFSTED (1996), recognised the need for individual schools to modify the curriculum to suit their pupils, and supported the practice of 'tailoring the curriculum to meet individual need.'

Headteachers from all the case study schools, and all the LEA interviewees, agreed that it was important to focus on the child's whole environment, both at school and at home, and on the quality of their family and school relationships. Approaches which focused solely on the child and his or her behaviour, without examining factors affecting their behaviour at school and home, were not likely to prevent the exclusion of a vulnerable child. One LEA interviewee, seeking to explain the overall increase in exclusion rates, both locally and nationally, expressed it in this way:

> Schools are now thinking that we cannot tolerate certain types of behaviour or expression, and we've got to do something about it. I think schools are saying 'We want to rid ourselves of anti-social expression,' instead of saying 'How do we deal with educating all children, whether or not they we can understand their behaviour?' If they can get rid of children who are perceived as being the 'baddies' in the school, then that makes them a more credible school for parents. It is a sad comment on competition. (LEA interviewee)

A 'no exclusions' policy?

The most radical way to reduce national levels of permanent exclusion would be to ban the practice altogether. Parffrey (1994) makes the point that schools in Canada and the USA do not exclude children, as schooling is seen as a basic human right. Bourne *et al* (1994) advocate abolition of permanent exclusions from primary schools as: 'it cannot be claimed realistically that pupils of primary school age, no matter how disruptive or difficult they may become, ever constitute... a serious danger.' Sassoon (1992b) also argues for a ban on permanent exclusions.

None of the teachers or headteachers interviewed from the six case study schools supported this viewpoint. All saw exclusion as a last resort, and many characterised the permanent exclusion of a pupil as a failure on the school's part. Nevertheless all, including the two primary headteachers – one of whom had never used it and the other who had permanently excluded only two pupils in 20 years as headteacher – advocated retaining permanent exclusion as an ultimate sanction:

> We don't have a 'no exclusions' policy because if you do you set a very difficult precedent. There are schools with 'no exclusions' policies, and they get into trouble because you do need it there as a deterrent. If you have a case where you come to the conclusion that you've used every available resource yourself, and the parents have worked through every possible strategy, there's nothing else to do. It's knowing when to use it. (Head, Primary School E)

> I would say permanent exclusion is a defeat. (Head, Secondary School A)

All stressed the need for the school, parents and the pupil to accept shared responsibility for the pupil's behaviour, particularly when something had gone wrong:

> We always make sure that we are talking about 'our' problem, not 'your' problem or what the child is like. It's a problem that all three, school and parent and child, have to try and put right. (Head, Primary School F).

School Development Plan

In each of the case study schools, issues of discipline were dealt with in the school development plan, where they were also seen as related to partnership with parents. In schools which had been able to reduce previously high exclusion rates, the issue of exclusions was explicitly addressed. Responses and strategies outlined included staff training, mechanisms for greater pupil and parental participation, and specific support for vulnerable pupils.

Behaviour policies

Each of the schools had in place a policy on behaviour, which had been negotiated with staff and discussed with parents. The newly reconstituted Secondary School C had, as part of its fresh start, canvassed parents' views on behaviour by means of a questionnaire. At the end of its first year, it was following this up by asking parents how they felt the school had developed, with pupil behaviour one of the issues investigated. By asking parents what they saw as acceptable, normal and good behaviour in schools, they had won approval from many pupils, who indicated that the parents' questionnaire had opened up debate about these issues at home. Pupils felt their views were being taken into consideration as well as those of their parents.

In each of our six case study schools, a pupil code of conduct or set of expectations was prominently displayed in classrooms. In both the primary schools, these had been drawn up and illustrated by pupils in that area or class.

Each school had developed its own system of rewards and sanctions, which were generally explicit in the behaviour code. As one deputy headteacher explained, the aim was to provide a structure of support for difficult pupils, with a full range of lesser sanctions:

> We want to put as many steps between the youngster and permanent exclusion as possible. A number of fixed term exclusions might indicate a propensity to move towards permanent, but it's not necessarily the case. There's always got to be a way back for the youngster until the point of permanent exclusion, and even then there can be an appeal of course. We try to affect the culture within which we operate so that we enhance the ability of staff to see other ways of managing behaviour than exclusion. (Deputy Head, Secondary School B)

Secondary School A had prepared a checklist setting out actions which should be taken to resolve a problem before exclusion is imposed; it is reproduced at the end of this chapter (p 51).

Some evidence, for example that of Holland and Hamerton (1994), has suggested that even within schools there can be inconsistency in the types of offence for which pupils are, and are not, excluded. However, both the teachers and LEA officers we interviewed argued that policies listing particular offences as leading to exclusion should be avoided, as they could put headteachers in the position of having to exclude a pupil when mitigating circumstances might make exclusion inappropriate in that case. While this might mean treating the same offence differently when committed by different children or groups of pupils, it could also reduce the number of exclusions. But clear explanations of school policy must be made to both pupils and parents, so that they can see the justice of a school's approach:

> We try to suggest to schools that they don't corner themselves into situations where their policy demands they exclude regardless of the full range of circumstances. We hope that schools won't feel trapped into excluding any pupil. When a headteacher makes that decision it should be one he or she is absolutely committed to, not forced by the way the policy is worded. Flexibility [in the policy] enables heads to be confident about why they're excluding and to make sure that no group is penalised by the policy. Some accusations of differential treatment creep in, but... I think it's about making sure that parents and others know what the school's behaviour policy is, so that everybody is clear about the justice of things. (LEA interviewee)

Pastoral care

Effective pastoral care systems were highlighted by a number of headteachers as contributing to good discipline and self-discipline among pupils. At some schools, the behaviour policy was incorporated within the school's pastoral policy, as one headteacher explained:

> We have a school pastoral policy. We decided to use the term pastoral because it encompasses more than just behaviour – when you think of behaviour you think in terms of right and wrong, children being naturally at fault and the school having to put them right. We felt that it is all to do with relationships between adults and children, between adults and adults, and between children. Unless the school as an institution creates a sense of well-being and an atmosphere of harmony, then behaviour will not be addressed. It is better if you start with a sense of belonging, of children feeling they are worth something. Our pastoral policy looks

at two aspects of behaviour: promoting positive behaviour and dealing appropriately with negative behaviour. To promote positive behaviour we encourage everyone, regardless of whether they are self-disciplined or not, to do better. We wanted to help children see that making mistakes is part of learning, and if an effort is made to overcome a mistake, then one should be praised for it. (Head, Primary School E)

Managing difficult behaviour and developing discipline is to do with the whole school ethos. We are in the business of caring and supporting, therefore we do whatever we can. We are in the business of being fair. Another thing we looked at was how to reinforce positive behaviour. (Head, Secondary School A)

Some schools had worked hard to ensure that their Personal and Social Education curriculum allowed all pupils to reflect on issues relating to their personal conduct. One school was seeking to make links between the skills required for independent learning and those which permitted pupils to take greater responsibility for themselves more generally, including responsibility for their conduct:

We set up an induction programme for Year 7 pupils, and during the first week they have longer to consider issues relating to conduct than is possible during a PSE lesson. The PSE programme looks at our pupil codes of conduct and does exercises around them. We also introduced a study lesson in Years 7 and 8 last year. We were trying to replicate the supervised private study period that private schools have. We deliberately don't want to have study skills as the only part of the diet but we are trying to replicate the process of studying independently. (Deputy head, Secondary School B)

Home-school contracts

The six headteachers had different views about the value of home school contracts. Five of the six believed that they were of limited value: first, because children generally do not plan to get into trouble, and secondly because such contracts are ultimately unenforceable:

Contracts with parents are a nonsense. I'm a dad too. My kid doesn't leave home thinking he's going to be bad. We all know, if we are honest, that we teach our children the best that we know, but sometimes they go and do something bad. It's important to have a sanguine view. (Head, School B, secondary)

In the one school where home-school contracts existed, their purpose was largely to aid communication between parents and teachers; they were not individually drafted contracts but general ones, and the process of drawing them up had been useful in developing a working relationship between parents and teachers:

New parents are given a contract, a home-school contract that was drawn up by a group of parents working with teachers. It itemises what the parents can expect from the school, what the school can expect from the parents, and what the school will expect from the pupils – simple things like bringing your equipment, homework, parents coming to parents' evenings. (Head, Secondary School D)

Working with parents

Schools can also take action to improve liaison with parents. Lang (1995) found that parents of excluded pupils often felt they lacked support from school, and vice versa. Schools also said they received little support from external agencies. ACE (1992a) reported that many parents (50% in 1990, 70% in 1992) 'felt they had not been sufficiently involved or consulted before things came to a head;' they also found that some parents had been denied their legal rights. Garner (1993 and 1994) emphasised the importance of incorporating the views of students who are termed disruptive and those of their parents, and points out that the DfE had also recommended this (DfE 1993). Normington and Kyriacou (1994) note that partnership with parents is important but difficult.

To manage children with behavioural problems, it is important for schools to work effectively with parents. If, as one of the LEA interviewees suggested, schools find it more difficult to work with black parents, then black pupils are likely to remain more vulnerable to exclusion than their white peers.

The schools in this study acknowledged close relationships with parents as one of their strengths. Pupils from case study schools also noted that their schools were in close contact with their parents; for example, sending letters home when a pupil had achieved some success, either in work or behaviour. One headteacher explained how teachers and parents in his school had learnt from each other about managing children:

> We firmly believe our partnership with parents has helped keep that problem [the challenge of establishing shared values and expectations between home and school] to a minimum. As a result we've been able to reinforce good practice on both sides. We have literally changed the attitude and practices of some of our parents to become more positive and responsible for their children. Having said that, some very good parents have influenced some of our less able teachers to become more responsive and sensitive to the needs of children. (Head, Primary School E)

At one school, the grandfather of a Year 7 child who was having difficulties with behaviour offered to come in and sit in on lessons to support the boy. This type of strategy has been used quite a lot in primary schools, but is less common in secondary schools. With the grandfather supporting the boy in mathematics and physical education, the tutor noticed an improvement in the behaviour of the whole class, as the grandson and other children tried to impress the grandfather:

> I know that some children would be totally embarrassed and it wouldn't work, but for this case it really worked extremely well because the child wanted to impress that granddad. The granddad kept a close eye on him, which was wonderful, and when he had homework, his granddad could help him at home. (Teacher, Secondary School B)

Practical communication strategies for parents and teachers of a vulnerable child can include the child carrying a report card that needs to be signed by parents or carers as well as by teachers, and regular telephone contact between the tutor and parents to help support a child in difficulties. The pupil can have a 'target book' which specifies targets for improvements in behaviour or other aspects of the child's life in school, monitored by a talk at the end of each day with the head of year.

One secondary school invites parents of pupils vulnerable to exclusion to a meeting with the Chair of governors, who gives the pupil a 'fatherly chat.' The governor thus acts as a support for the pupil. At another school, when any pupil is readmitted after a fixed term exclusion, there is a meeting between a member of the governing body, a senior staff member, the parents and the pupil to agree an action plan for future expectations.

Mentoring

Some schools had introduced a mentoring programme for pupils who were presenting behavioural problems or were disaffected. In one secondary school, a group of African Caribbean boys who had been regularly in trouble and were perceived as vulnerable to exclusion were being informally mentored by the (white) headteacher. In another, an African Caribbean man had been invited to weekly sessions with African Caribbean boys:

> We've tried to develop equal opportunities practice and have tried to be very open about it, for instance, inviting someone in to work with and support African Caribbean boys, taking them off their timetable for an hour a week. The aim is not just to maintain them in the school but to promote achievement. We are concerned about underachievement. It's a class issue and it's across the races, but it is particularly a boys' issue. Another aim is to raise self-esteem, and we buy in consultants to work with the pupils on half-day conferences, to get them thinking about 'Where do I want to be in three or four or five years time?' (Head, Secondary School D)

In Primary School F, a large number of Year 6 pupils had been presenting problems, and many teachers had felt that some of them deserved exclusion. One strategy employed was to invite each of these pupils to choose a mentor from among the staff to help them through their last months in the school without being excluded. Children were free to select anyone they wanted, other than the headteacher, and all those nominated had agreed to support and encourage the child. The headteacher did not act as a mentor because, as he pointed out, 'I might need to be in judgement.'

Although some schools may develop mentoring programmes with outside agencies and community organisations (see p 49), the responsibility for effective mentoring and tutoring of individual pupils

remains with the school, and most schools would depend on their teaching staff to act as mentors. Research suggests that matching vulnerable pupils with a tutor can be significant in reducing exclusions: in schools where the role of tutor was seen as important there were low exclusion rates, and vice versa (McManus 1990, cited in Newton 1994). Effective individual tutorial support for all pupils may minimise exclusions, as may special mentoring for vulnerable pupils.

Equal opportunities policy and practice

One explanation suggested for the overrepresentation of African Caribbean pupils within the exclusion statistics is racism. The suggestion is not that most teachers operate in overtly racist ways, but that deep-seated stereotypes held by teachers and school governors may lead to black children being seen as having behavioural difficulties. Bridges (1994) suggests that with additional pressures on black families from high levels of unemployment, cuts in social spending, racial harassment and 'social dislocation imposed on their family and community life... It is hardly surprising that some black children present themselves as "aggressive" in school, as this is a stance that society outside has taught them is necessary for survival.'

Various ethnographic studies (for example, Gillborn 1990, Mirza 1992, Brook 1991) have shown that, as Nehaul (1996) put it, 'negative teacher attitudes can be a contributory and harmful factor in the school experiences of pupils of Caribbean heritage;' they suggest that African Caribbean pupils are more likely to be reprimanded than their peers and have more sanctions applied to them for similar behaviour.

Sinclair Taylor's (1995) research found that in a school with a unit for statemented pupils (largely those identified as having educational and behavioural difficulties), 45% of the pupils in the unit were African Caribbean, a proportion five times greater than in the school's overall population. He concludes:

> From observations in the school and conversations with staff and pupils, it emerged that a link between ethnicity and behaviour difficulties had developed. The explicit linkage of African-Caribbean pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties further compromises their integration into the school. (Sinclair Taylor 1995)

Research in one metropolitan LEA by Stirling (1993a) found that over 40% of excluded pupils were African Caribbean, though this ethnic group made up less than 10% of the pupil population. Stirling noted that most 'professionals external to the school' felt there had been racism in exclusions. She concluded that 'the race of the child very often features as an issue in the background to the exclusion' and that 'in exclusions of black pupils, attention is focused on the child's

misbehaviour, ie, the symptoms of the problem, rather than on possible causes which are specific to black children.'

Stirling argues that although schools think they treat all their pupils the same and do not exclude black pupils unfairly, they do not take into account the factors that have caused the unacceptable behaviour leading to the exclusion, particularly racial harassment by other pupils: 'Throughout the course of my research I have found evidence of open racism demonstrated by staff in schools to be uncommon. Far more common is the racial harassment of a black child by a white peer group.' This assertion is supported by other evidence (Bourne 1994; ACE 1992a).

If, as Stirling suggests 'schools often exclude the black child for behaviour that develops as a response to long term underlying racism which is not being adequately addressed by the school', then it is important for schools to have in place adequate measures to challenge racial harassment – both making clear to harassers that such behaviour is unacceptable, and demonstrating support for those who may experience harassment, so that they do not feel they are left to respond alone. It is often hard for a child to substantiate claims of racism, particularly when there has been a long series of incidents, attitudes and comments.

Four of the schools in this study had a written equal opportunities policy. The exceptions were Secondary Schools C and D. The former, as a new school, was still developing its policy. Both had a broad statement of commitment to equal opportunities.

Within their equal opportunities, behavioural or pastoral policies, all but one of our six case study schools had written guidelines on tackling racial harassment. It is important that schools make explicit their opposition to racial harassment and racial name-calling, rather than simply saying that name-calling or 'hurtful' behaviour towards others is unacceptable. As one LEA officer noted:

> We would also want to see an overt section on racist name calling (or racial harassment), in fact some kind of recognition that while name-calling is not necessarily illegal, racism is. (LEA interviewee)

Some of the teachers interviewed suggested that it might not be helpful to be explicit about racist name-calling, since not all children would necessarily understand it. Yet if the curriculum of a school is to address the issues outlined in the behavioural and equal opportunities policies, then such explicitness is useful. Responses from pupils, discussed below, suggest that they are aware of the problem of racial abuse and harassment and perceive it as being more widespread than their teachers recognise. Their experiences suggest the need for explicit policies on racial harassment, outlining how the school will respond and setting out a clear complaints procedure.

Another LEA interviewee argued that it was possible to find a form of words covering such behaviour which could be accepted by the whole school community and understood by children:

> Schools need to be more specific. I suppose they are trying to be careful that they don't cause any stirs with the governing body, or anyone else, but we need to name certain things here. If we are talking about a policy relating to oppression, examples of racial attack or abuse, we [need to] give examples of these things because these are issues. They need to have more specific wording for some of the policies they are trying to develop because there are real issues that emerge in schools. Language can be kept simple so that children understand what is totally unacceptable. Some parents do raise [the issue of racial harassment in the exclusion of their child]. Schools, I think, are reluctant to accept that as a factor. It's an area of concern for me. There are schools that find it difficult to deal with the black pupils that they have, and how they deal with them and their parents. I've known heads who fear talking to black parents, and that's worrying. I feel the issue of racism and exclusion needs to be raised more. (LEA interviewee)

A newly qualified teacher explained how staff in her school would respond to and record an incident of racial harassment:

> We have a yellow slip which we give to the children if they are going against the equal opportunities policy. If I saw a child who was going against the policy I would give him a yellow form and it would go on his file. If a child felt they were experiencing racial abuse from a member of staff, we would tell them to speak to the form tutor. The tutor will not say, 'Oh, that's just a child speaking.' If a child did approach a tutor, the tutor would then take it up and speak to the head of year and it would go up from there. It would be looked upon quite seriously. (Teacher, Secondary School B)

A number of the teachers interviewed were noticeably uncomfortable about exploring racial issues in relation to exclusion, such as the over-representation of African Caribbean boys among pupils excluded from school. Many said that they had little or no training in equal opportunities issues. Headteachers were generally more at ease with the issues, although this was not always the case.

Staff training and support

Our research in six good practice schools indicated an ongoing need for teacher training on racial equality issues. Teachers interviewed said that they were committed to equality of opportunity, but many of their responses suggested uncertainty about how to guarantee equality for culturally diverse groups of pupils. Nevertheless, one of the headteachers interviewed reported that he and his staff were much more comfortable than they had been in the past about dealing with issues such as racial harassment:

> We make explicit that any sort of racial harassment in any sort of aggro situation is not tolerated. I think that one thing that has happened over the last few years is

that staff, including myself, feel much more comfortable in actually saying that quite openly. I did last week in assembly, when we were talking about feelings. We actually talk about it. For me, twenty years ago I would have found difficulty in talking to the children like that because I knew I would lose a lot of the teacher audience. They felt, like religion and politics, you shouldn't talk about it. It wasn't right for school. I wasn't strong enough at that point to actually take it on. As new people come into the school, much younger than me, they see that it is perfectly proper that we must tackle those issues, and that's given me the confidence to say what I think. (Head, Primary School F)

Developing explicit policies on racial equality may thus give direct support to teachers as well as to pupils and their parents. In the short-term, teachers need support in dealing with issues of race and racism in their schools and classrooms. Our interviews also highlighted the need for more teachers and headteachers from ethnic minority backgrounds as a medium- to long-term aim.

The challenge of working with teachers to develop a staff culture in which exclusion was seen as a defeat, and which recognised other ways of managing difficult behaviour, was discussed by some of the headteachers we interviewed. The head of the new Secondary School C felt that its relatively high number of fixed term exclusions was because the school had not yet developed appropriate staff strategies for successfully managing learning and behaviour in the classroom:

A lot of the behavioural problems we have, and I don't think we have many, are due to the fact that the whole staff have not got together to go through our approach to aspects of misbehaviour in real depth. So what I think is happening, a member of staff does something inappropriate – I'm not criticising anyone, it happens – and a kid gets into the situation where the school has to send them home. But I think that if we can change the approach in the classroom more, this would happen less. At the moment we have to react to situations and also we are trying to send a message to the students about the new standards we want.... Next year I will be horrified if we still have the same level of temporary exclusions. (Head, Secondary School C)

All the headteachers saw staff training in behaviour management as a key factor in avoiding exclusions. Equally important, they said, was developing a school culture of inclusion, which accepted all children regardless of their problems or behaviour. Some teachers had attended specific training courses in behavioural management. But headteachers and senior staff placed more emphasis on the need to train the whole staff team to work together and support each other in managing difficult behaviour, to share strategies, and not to feel that by asking for help they were failing or revealing a weakness:

There is always immediate support [if a teacher is experiencing difficulties]. Children can be sent here, all the staff know that. You can send children down with work or you can just send them down if things are tough and you need to get them out of the room. They also know they can put children to work outside their room, preferably only for a short time. We also have a system where the

senior management team do a sweep once a morning and afternoon. They go round and pop into the classroom to see who's there and what's going on. Also, we try to arrange for teachers to see other colleagues at work – that's not always easy. One whole department decided they would be watched by an external consultant and that would become their focus. (Head, Secondary School D)

We've had discussions at staff meetings about behaviour, and we've looked at strategies that staff members have used. Periodically, we've also looked at whether the sanctions we have in place are effective. Last year, as part of our school review, we asked staff to comment on how effective they felt the pastoral system was. There's also the support of the colleague next door, there's the policy guidelines on what strategies can be used, there's myself as head who will always come in if need be. No-one's really said 'I've tried everything that's proposed and I'm still having problems.' (Head, Primary School E)

Ethnic minority staff

Our sample of teachers, headteachers and LEA interviewees included a small number of black and Asian staff, including three in senior positions. They had far greater confidence about discussing racial inequality in relation to exclusions, even raising the issue themselves in response to a more general question rather than waiting for the interviewer to introduce the subject. They made more practical suggestions on how schools and related agencies might address the disproportionate exclusion of black pupils than any other interviewees. For example, they stressed how the curriculum and displays around the school could reflect the experiences of local ethnic minority communities, and how schools could build up working relationships with ethnic minority community organisations. They stressed the importance of all schools re-examining the national curriculum to identify opportunities to introduce material relevant to their pupils' range of cultural backgrounds and to address racial equality issues.

Using community and support services effectively

Previous research has suggested that, in many cases of exclusion, support from outside the school has been lacking, while the support provided within schools has been to help the teacher cope, rather than to help pupils overcome their problems (Abbotts and Parsons 1993). We found that our case study schools drew on a range of outside support services, including both voluntary agencies and LEA support services. However, resources for these services are limited, so they may not be available for all pupils who need them.

Where a pupil was believed to have special educational needs (SEN), it was likely that the school would draw on the services of the LEA's Schools' Psychological Service, which would assess the child for special educational needs, or if a child might be behaving badly to

cover up learning difficulties, call on its Pupil and School Support Service.

The schools also drew on the LEA's Behaviour Support Service. This provides qualified teachers to work with vulnerable children, perhaps shadowing them in lessons, supporting the teacher responsible for pastoral care, or arranging for pupils to spend time in a local centre where staff work with pupils on behaviour patterns. One headteacher stressed that time spent away from school at a centre was not always useful, since many children needed specific support on things like anger management or self-esteem, which they did not get at the centre. For this reason she had decided to invest funds and staff time in working with outside agencies, including developing links with ethnic minority community organisations.

Other LEA-run agencies available to work with schools were the Educational Welfare Service and Education Social Workers. Whichever services are employed to help a child vulnerable to exclusion, effective inter-agency cooperation and partnership between the child, the parents and the school and all the other agencies involved is important. Effective support of this nature would:

> ...focus not on the child as the centre of the problem, but on the relationship between the child and the school environment, making sure the school is working appropriately to minimise disruptive behaviour. It would have an element of looking at the community – the relationship between parents and school and the support that the parents are giving the school. It would also look at the school environment and make sure they're maximising opportunities for learning – from basic nitty-gritty things like what's on the wall, how relevant it is, how long it has been there and how well looked after, to more substantial things about teachers and what they're actually teaching and how they are delivering it.
> (LEA interviewee)

Previous research, and our interviews with LEA staff and ethnic minority teachers, highlighted a degree of mistrust between some black community organisations and schools, due to community concerns that black children have been disadvantaged in the school system over the years. Schools, as well as community organisations, need to work hard to overcome such mistrust:

> It goes back to the fifties, when black children were labelled 'educationally subnormal'; these days we hear about exclusions, and research shows that it's six times more likely that black boys will be excluded – what are we going to do? We need to look at some serious strategies in response to this. (LEA interviewee)

One community-based strategy that has been welcomed by a number of Birmingham schools is the KWESI project (Klein 1995), set up by local headteacher Gilroy Brown and former supplementary school teacher and graphic designer Guy Woolery. This is a mentoring

scheme run by black men concerned about the crisis in the education of African Caribbean boys. It targets boys identified by their primary schools as underachievers or at risk of exclusion. KWESI asks its mentors and participating schools to adopt a 'no blame' approach, so that both parties work for the best interests of the child rather than focus on past wrongs or misunderstandings. The mentors are all trained volunteers, and the scheme is supported by the LEA although it is independently funded. When schools agree to work with KWESI, they must accept its volunteers as partners, sharing information and accepting them as part of the school team, with access to information, staff and governors. Each volunteer regularly visits the school he is assigned to, and works in classes with the child he is mentoring.

We interviewed one of KWESI's coordinators as part of this research, although none of our case study schools were among those working with KWESI. However, our interviews with headteachers and LEA personnel suggest that the scheme has been influential beyond the schools where its volunteers were working. It has made headteachers aware of the need to address the disproportionate exclusion of African Caribbean boys. Although this awareness clearly needs to be backed by other practical initiatives by schools, our interviews suggested that it has contributed to a change in the climate of opinion and an increased understanding of the need to monitor exclusions.

Another local initiative which had attracted the attention and imagination of local headteachers was the 'Second City, Second Chance' project, which uses peer group mentoring to tackle the problem of exclusions.

Another way in which schools can improve their links with the community is by opening school premises to community uses. At Primary School F, a holiday club has been set up to provide structured activities for pupils. Although coordinated by the school, it does not require teachers to give up their leisure time but is run by volunteers. Its impact reaches far beyond its practical value in organising enjoyable activities and excursions, because it is seen as evidence of the school's partnership with parents and community.

Monitoring

Monitoring of exclusions varied considerably among the case study schools. Some headteachers, for example, did not have the data to discuss numbers of fixed term exclusions in relation to permanent exclusions, nor any evidence on whether fixed term exclusions helped to prevent permanent exclusions. All agreed on the need for further monitoring. Birmingham LEA provides support for schools' monitoring by analysing their records to highlight any patterns in exclusion rates, by ethnic group and sex.

A school wishing to monitor exclusions thoroughly would need to collect and systematically analyse data for both fixed term and permanent exclusions, by sex, ethnic group, special educational needs, socio-economic background (eg, entitlement to free school meals) and Year group. Schools can record additional data which might indicate a need for changes in practice or school policies; for example, recording which other pupils and teachers are involved in incidents leading to exclusion. The desirability of recording and monitoring action taken to support vulnerable pupils was also stressed by a number of schools.

Conclusion

Rowbotham (1995) concluded that successful behaviour management is 'a matter of ethos, policy and management.' Headteachers acknowledged that in deciding whether to exclude a child, they had to balance pressures from parents and from staff; they were also conscious that permanently excluding a child loses the school the funding which follows that pupil. Nevertheless, the headteachers of all the good practice schools we studied argued that what was foremost in their minds when a decision on exclusion was taken was the best interests of the child and of other pupils.

Permanent exclusion was, in each school, a last resort after exhausting all other options and courses of action to address the child's needs and resolve behavioural difficulties. All six schools worked to minimise exclusions as part of their overall school development plan, through staff and external agency teamwork, and by promoting equal opportunities and involving pupils in school decision-making.

CAN PERMANENT EXCLUSION BE AVOIDED? CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS

Before permanently excluding a child, schools may wish to check whether other possible measures have been exhausted. The steps listed below are an aide memoire produced by one case study school.

- Has there been full consultation about the pupils' problems with

  Subject staff
  Group tutor
  Head of year
  School nurse
  Deputy headteacher
  Headteacher
  Parents at school
  Parents at home
  Education social worker
  Behavioural support service
  Pupil support service

- Has the pupil been involved at each stage of these discussions?

- Have all the following possible actions within the school been taken? (Was the pupil notified of the reasons for each action?) For example

  Positive actions
  Individual education plan
  Change of teaching set
  Change of tutor group
  Change of subjects, where appropriate
  Awards offered for achieving specific targets
  Service to the school community
  Behaviour support service individual consultation

  Deterrent actions
  Daily report
  Detention or other sanction as appropriate
  Supervision during free time
  Withdrawal from lessons

- Have all appropriate agencies been consulted?

  Behaviour support service
  Pupil support service
  The child health service
  Educational psychological service
  Social services
  The police/young offender team

- Has there been a case conference, initiated by the school and including external agencies where appropriate?

- Should a fresh start within the school be offered, subject to a contract agreed with the pupil and his or her parents?

6 PUPILS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

In order to build up a fuller picture of how the case study schools managed pupil behaviour, we sought pupils' views on discipline and related matters. A questionnaire was completed by 108 secondary and 50 primary pupils in five of the case study schools (three secondary and two primary). The secondary pupils were from Years 9 and 10, aged 13-15, and the primary pupils were all in Year 6, aged 10-11. They were asked about pupil teacher relationships, about school discipline and behavioural codes, and about pupil participation in school decision-making.

Pupil-teacher relationships

In all five schools, most of the pupils thought relationships between pupils and teachers generally were either good or excellent. Primary pupils tended to rate these relationships more highly than their secondary counterparts; almost all primary pupils also rated their own relationships with teachers as good or excellent. Only two primary pupils, both white boys from School F, felt that their own relationships with teachers were noticeably less good than those of pupils generally. Almost all the primary pupils in both schools said that there was mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Most pupils at Primary School F also believed that pupils showed respect for each other. But just one in four pupils at Primary School E believed pupils showed respect for each other.

At Secondary School A, five out of 37 pupils rated their own relationships with teachers as poor, although all these pupils believed relationships generally to be good or excellent; in Secondary School C, only one girl and one boy (out of a total of 31) rated their own relationships with teachers as poor. However, at Secondary School D, more than one in four of the pupils surveyed believed their own relationships with teachers to be poor, and this amounted to almost half the boys surveyed at this school. Although ethnic minority pupils formed a relatively small proportion of the School D population (12%), they were considerably overrepresented among those classifying their relationships with teachers as poor (42%).

The proportion of secondary pupils who believed pupils generally respected their teachers varied from 58% at the new School C, to 41% at School A and 37% at School D. A majority of secondary

pupils (between 65% and 85%) believed that teachers generally respected pupils, although a few pupils noted that this varied between teachers. School C again received the highest rating.

Teacher strictness

Most primary school pupils thought teachers were as strict as their parents, with 10% finding teachers more strict and 8.5% finding them less strict. It was interesting that, at School F which had no teachers from ethnic minorities, four of the six boys from ethnic minority backgrounds thought their teachers less strict. At School E, where ethnic minority teachers were relatively well represented at all levels, there was no difference in responses from pupils from different ethnic groups. About two-thirds of pupils from all the secondary schools found teachers either more strict or about the same as their parents. There were no clear patterns by ethnicity.

These responses challenge media representations of schools as lacking in discipline. There have been claims that 'deteriorating home circumstances and lack of parental discipline' have been a contributory factor to the rise in exclusions from school (eg, NUT 1992). The responses we obtained from pupils at these five schools, many from economically disadvantaged families, suggest that there is generally some consistency between standards at home and at school. Our research also highlights that high exclusion rates are not inevitable among schools which draw their pupils from economically disadvantaged families.

Codes of conduct

The overwhelming majority of pupils from all five schools said that their school had a written code of conduct and that they knew what standards of behaviour were expected of them. In four of our five schools, most pupils said that they had had a say in drawing up the code, and that they were aware of the various rewards and sanctions which applied. It was notable that the primary school pupils were able to list as many rewards as sanctions, whereas the secondary school pupils tended to highlight sanctions.

The responses from a large proportion of the primary school pupils and some secondary school pupils did not distinguish between behaviour and achievement, so that good work was equated with good behaviour and bad work with bad behaviour. A significant minority of secondary school pupils argued that their school did not reward good behaviour.

Discipline problems

In all three secondary schools and one of the primary schools, fighting and violence between pupils was cited as the most common discipline problem. In one secondary school, all the pupils surveyed agreed on this. Several pupils made the point that fighting was qualitatively different from other discipline problems, such as bullying or racial or sexual harassment, in that it was rarely, if ever, planned, and that it occurred as a result of 'silly things' or 'stupid reasons'. Primary pupils, too, said that hitting, punching and kicking, together with swearing, were recurrent problems.

Despite being identified by pupils as the most common discipline problem, violence is not generally a principal cause for exclusions, as Blyth and Milner (1994) observe. Far more common is 'a constellation of negative, disruptive, insolent and uncooperative behaviour' (NUT 1992, DfE 1992, 1993). Nevertheless, violence may be a significant contributory factor, especially if disputes are left unresolved and grudges are held. As one girl observed, problems can arise as a result of 'fights which aren't always sorted out'.

Bullying and harassment

Bullying was cited as a discipline problem by a minority of primary school pupils (14%), but by nearly two-thirds of secondary school pupils. However, pupils generally agreed that the issue had been tackled in their school. As one girl said: 'Bullying and name-calling are a problem in every school but [this school] has got a tight lid on it.'

Racial abuse and racial name-calling was cited by a substantial number of pupils, both primary and secondary, as a problem. It was acknowledged as frequently by white pupils as by those from ethnic minorities, and was most commonly cited (by more than eight out of 10 pupils) in the secondary school with the lowest proportion of ethnic minority pupils. Two white girls from this school observed: 'I think sometimes the teachers are racist against black people', and 'I think that at [this school] people with a different colour are seen as dirty and ugly, which is wrong.'

Meanwhile in Primary School E, where over 80% of the pupils were from ethnic minority communities, seven out of 10 pupils also raised racial name-calling as a problem. In Primary School F, where ethnic minority pupils made up less than 30% of the school roll, where the headteacher believed that racial harassment was a thing of the past, and where none of teachers felt it was a problem, more than a quarter of the children cited it as one.

Similarly, sexual harassment and sexual name-calling were mentioned as problems by substantial numbers of pupils, more than a

quarter of the sample; interestingly, nearly half of them were boys. Although the questionnaire did not define what is meant by sexual harassment, its identification by significant numbers of pupils as a problem in their school seems to call for further research.

Pupils' suggestions

Media reporting about school exclusions is often presented as alarm at a 'general decline in behavioural standards among the young' (Lloyd-Smith 1993), and some commentators have argued that changes in social conditions are causing an increased 'level and intensity of difficult behaviour' (Gray *et al* 1994).

But many of the young people in this study showed themselves capable of offering creative and thoughtful solutions which might contribute to a reduction in exclusions. Several acknowledged that they could improve their own behaviour, and suggested schemes to help them do so. They also made suggestions about how teachers might modify their approaches. These ranged from very practical measures (for example, a primary school pupil suggested that pupils who were not getting on with each other should have to spend their breaks in separate playgrounds) to broad changes in relationships between adults and children: 'Teachers should care more' (Primary pupil). One pupil recommended that some teachers should be offered special training in managing difficult children. Another suggestion was that offending pupils should be required to make a practical reparation to the school community, for instance by 'scrubbing the toilets.'

Two suggestions were for support structures which might directly address pupils' concerns over fighting and levels of violence; both reflect an interest by pupils in being trained and supported in peaceful conflict resolution techniques. One was that '[the school] could create a counselling club and train pupils to be the counsellors, because most find it hard to talk to teachers about their problems'. The other was to: 'Make a pupils' court so pupils can solve problems between other pupils there.'

A number of the secondary pupils asked for more talking between teachers and pupils, and particularly for discussion and careful investigation when things go wrong, rather than immediate punishment. One African Caribbean boy wrote:

> If the teachers could be more fair and understanding with the kids [it would help]. Some of the kids will have more consideration and give respect to teachers if they get some in return. Most teachers think they give us respect but they are most mistaken.

An African Caribbean girl observed that: 'If teachers can respect pupils as humans, then pupils will take notice of what the teachers are saying.'

These viewpoints imply the same approach to school discipline and justice as was advocated by a secondary headteacher concerned to develop his school as a community which respects human rights (Cunningham 1991; Osler and Starkey 1996). The constructive responses from so many pupils in the sample suggest that children in both primary and secondary schools can play a valuable role in creating disciplined school environments, which in turn contribute to reducing school exclusions. They showed themselves as concerned as their teachers to develop orderly, cooperative school environments.

Pupil participation in decision-making

Teachers from all the case study schools suggested that pupil involvement in decision-making was a key to pupil cooperation and good discipline in school. Primary teachers argued that this could begin with the youngest children, who can draw up their own classroom rules, and can be extended as children grow older:

> We involve children in planning as a school at the beginning of the week for what's going to be happening. We've had a lot of discussion and suggestions about using things like 'circle time' and PSE. I do believe giving children forums for speaking helps a lot. In my own class, for example, we have a class council, which meets on a Friday. During the week they write down items that they want to discuss to make up the agenda for the end of week meeting. I think involving them in that way helps. They set rules for the class's home space [in an open-plan school] as well at the beginning of the year, and we discuss with them what our expectations are. As a school we believe that most children want to be good, they enjoy praise. (Deputy head, Primary School F)

Pupils from both primary and secondary schools were asked whether their school had school or class councils which played a part in decision-making, and where such structures existed to comment on their effectiveness. They were also invited to give their own ideas on how pupils could raise their concerns and play a more active role in school decision-making. The aim was first to establish the degree to which pupils were participating in decision-making within their schools, in line with the principles highlighted by the teachers interviewed and set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, notably article 12. Secondly, we wanted to assess the impact pupils felt that such participation had on behaviour and discipline in school.

Primary schools

It appeared from pupils' responses that neither primary school had a formal school council. However, staff and pupils in Primary School E had already begun to discuss how pupils' concerns might be represented, and over a third of children in this school felt that the school

should have either a school council or 'junior governing body.' One child wrote he would welcome anything which would 'make the teachers listen to pupils more,' and another argued for pupil involvement in decision-making which would 'make pupils respect teachers and each other more.' At the other primary school, one girl wrote: 'Give pupils more encouragement, talk to them,' and another said: 'Get us to comment on how we'd like the school to change.'

Secondary schools

Secondary Schools A and D had well-established school councils; all pupils in these schools were aware of the council's existence and the vast majority were able to explain its functions. At the new Secondary School C, two-thirds of pupils were aware of the school council, but less than half of these were able to explain its purpose or say what it discussed. Pupils at School D generally felt that the school council was important, although they noted problems such as delays in seeing decisions implemented. One girl who had served as a council representative explained how she personally had benefited from the experience: 'It gives you the courage to speak up.' Students said that, as a result of the council, 'things have changed for the better' and 'things have been made to happen,' citing efforts to stop bullying and an improvement in the 'disgraceful' condition of pupil toilets as examples of school council achievements.

At School A, the headteacher acknowledged problems in maintaining a regular schedule of council meetings. Although some students were critical of this, and of council representatives lacking opportunities for feedback, students were appreciative of the school council's efforts to tackle bullying and to provide individual lessons for those who were having problems with their work. One boy stated confidently: 'We make a difference.'

Pupils argued that involvement in decision-making increased their motivation to achieve and made them feel part of the school. Although they pointed out that it did not prevent some pupils from 'playing up', it had clearly given them a sense of confidence and involvement which improved pupil-teacher relations.

Other ways of involving pupils in decision-making

When asked to suggest other ways in which they might present their viewpoints or become more involved in decision-making, pupils from both primary and secondary schools had a range of suggestions. These included:

- setting up a school newspaper
- a suggestion box, to allow those who lacked confidence about expressing their concerns to do so anonymously
- using Personal and Social Education lessons to discuss school council business and prepare for meetings
- more surveys or questionnaires
- home visits by a specially appointed teacher to pupils who were having difficulties with their work
- invitations to parents to attend lessons and experience school directly
- special assemblies where students could raise their concerns
- occasional individual tutorial time for each pupil, each year.

This last idea was suggested by a number of students, and one secondary student wrote: 'They should ask each child what they think, how they feel... to show they care for them and to help them with any problem they have.'

A number of the suggestions made by pupils focused on pastoral care for pupils and on additional academic support. In many cases, pupils said explicitly that such initiatives would have a direct impact on school discipline. It appeared that a number of pupils made a direct link between opportunities for decision-making, appropriate academic and pastoral support, and levels of pupil cooperation and discipline.

While many of their suggestions might require some additional resources, some would be achievable through reallocation of existing resources. If successful in resolving disputes and discipline problems, the support structures and preventive strategies suggested might save considerable staff time. Again, pupil concerns seemed to coincide with the interests of teachers. Creating opportunities for pupils to participate in decision-making and share responsibilities would appear to have direct benefits for the whole school community.

7 GOOD PRACTICE AT LEA LEVEL

Inter-LEA cooperation

An example of good practice in inter-LEA cooperation is provided by the West Midlands Exclusions Forum, set up to bring representatives from nine LEAs together to share expertise and develop policies and strategies on school exclusions. As part of our investigation we attended a meeting of the Forum and interviewed participants from several of the LEAs involved. Others provided us with documentation and written responses to specific questions.

One member of the Forum saw its primary role as:

> ... developing a code of practice for procedures, what an authority should do to alert the neighbouring authority to the needs of a particular child. There will be an agreed information exchange; that is, we agree in advance what information will be transferred from one authority to the next. (LEA interviewee)

At the meeting of the Forum we attended, a wide range of issues relating to the support of schools and excluded children were discussed. Such a body can encourage the exchange of ideas and good practice. It would also address the needs of pupils living in one local authority but attending school in another. When such a child needs additional support, or is excluded from school, there has often been a muddle over which authority is responsible for providing services to the child and their family, and whose budget these services will come from. Forum members showed a sympathetic understanding of the needs of individual pupils, families and school. But the debate did not touch on race and ethnicity at all, nor acknowledge that government statistics show African Caribbean pupils being excluded four to six times more than would be expected from their proportion in the school-age population.

Given the insights on school exclusions and ethnic minority pupils provided by the ethnic minority professionals we interviewed, ensuring participation by ethnic minority personnel in such Forums would be valuable.

Leadership

One strategy adopted by Birmingham LEA has involved the Chief Education Officer setting himself a target of limiting the increase in exclusions to 10%. The CEO's adoption of 'minimising the increase in

exclusions' as a personal performance target has been an important symbolic step, demonstrating personal commitment and leadership on the issue:

> We hope to keep the increase within the 10% target we were set. I say 'we were set' as if we, the LEA, have some control over it, and we don't really. It was one of the Chief Education Officer's performance targets. I think it is to demonstrate that we are putting in support mechanisms into school and looking at that kind of area, behaviour management training packages and so on. We can try and be preventative and creative. (LEA interviewee)

A further challenge might be for the Chief Education Officer to focus on the high proportion of African Caribbean pupils among those excluded within the LEA by adopting a further personal performance target of reducing this overrepresentation. This would indicate to schools and LEA personnel generally that the issue is important, thus encouraging reallocation of resources to address the problem.

Another way that LEAs could take a lead is by making exclusion one of the priorities for governor training. Left to identify their own training needs, school governors may not place exclusion high on the agenda, since the need for expertise in this area may only become apparent in a crisis.

Above all there needs to be coordination among different sections of the LEA. In a large LEA like Birmingham, a team of people may deal with different aspects of exclusion cases. Even when resources limit the number of staff involved, it is important that one person should take an overview:

> One of the problems in [this LEA] is that nobody had responsibility for monitoring and for policy on exclusions before. We've now got a senior education officer who does have that overall brief, and his role is to coordinate the work that I'm doing on the exclusions working group, and what is being done by schools' officers who have day-to-day contact with schools. (LEA interviewee)

Encouraging sharing of good practice

LEAs should encourage 'good practice' schools which have achieved low or declining exclusion rates to share their experiences with those which have not. Garner (1993) advocates developing expertise by paired training. He argues that 'it may be sensible to consider pairing one high exclusion rate school with another which has a low exclusion rate... and which has a roughly similar socio-economic catchment.' For example, School A, with one of the lowest permanent exclusion rates in the LEA, has a neighbouring school with one of the highest exclusion rates. Both schools recruit from the same broad catchment area.

Monitoring and performance indicators

Requiring schools to keep records of both fixed term and permanent exclusions, and LEA analysis of patterns and trends in these, including ethnic monitoring, can provide useful feedback to schools. An LEA officer reported that, in her authority, grant-maintained schools were being encouraged to provide more than the statutory information to the LEA so that a comprehensive picture could emerge. In return, the LEA offered grant-maintained schools the service of analysing their data.

The headteachers we interviewed agreed, however, that publication of exclusion statistics would not be a useful performance indicator, nor have much impact on reducing exclusion rates, because a high exclusion rate is open to many different interpretations. Some schools claim that it indicates firm discipline. It might also indicate a large number of difficult pupils, inadequate pastoral and behavioural policies and practices, an inappropriate curriculum or teaching strategies, more accurate recording of temporary exclusions, or even a change of headteacher.

Inter-agency cooperation and support services to schools

Some of the headteachers and LEA staff we interviewed emphasised that good practice, both in the processes of exclusion and in minimising exclusion, depended on inter-agency cooperation. To reduce the high proportion of African Caribbean pupils among excluded pupils, agencies concerned with pupil welfare and support must work with those within the LEA focusing on equal opportunities issues and with black community groups also seeking to address the problem.

In one LEA, interviewees said that the weakness in their authority's approach to exclusions was that it had focused almost exclusively on whether pupils were being excluded when assessment for special educational needs, or SEN provision, would have been more appropriate. Interviewees from this authority responsible for managing exclusions were aware of other agencies addressing racial equality issues, but were not liaising with them.

An encouraging practical example has been the way that support by one LEA for the black community-led KWESI initiative (described on p 49) raised awareness of the disproportionate exclusion of African Caribbean boys among headteachers, particularly in schools where there were few ethnic minority pupils.

Supporting excluded pupils and their families

Another point emphasised by LEA interviewees was the need for liaison between the LEA and social services, so that an excluded pupil's

family could be offered support if needed, and so that agencies could address the specific needs of children in care who were excluded from school. Previous research has highlighted the need for good quality, properly researched and properly resourced support services for pupils at risk of exclusion, and their families (Parsons *et al* 1995).

In one LEA, an Education Social Worker was working with a black parents' support study group for parents of excluded children. While such measures do not have an immediate impact on reducing the exclusion figures, they may provide the support necessary for a child to be successfully reintegrated into school and to prevent further exclusion. Parents of vulnerable children can gain support when they require it by being members of such a group; for example, it can give them confidence when asked to come into schools to discuss their child with the headteacher.

Although LEAs are obliged to provide the parents of a child who has been permanently excluded from school with information about the appeals procedure, some LEA staff suggested that a leaflet giving more detailed information was also needed.

Support for schools which accept excluded pupils

Headteachers of schools with low exclusion rates often feel penalised if they are asked to accept pupils excluded from other schools. A pilot scheme in one of our LEAs gave headteachers in a small area, including heads of grant-maintained schools, collective responsibility for finding places for excluded pupils. Headteachers also suggested that the LEA might impose a ceiling on the number of previously excluded pupils a school should be expected to take within a given period, thus protecting the support available for difficult pupils within any one school.

Other ideas focused on reintegrating excluded pupils. For instance, School B had received a grant from the LEA to assist with the integration of excluded pupils. Although the Head argued that this had not stretched far, as such pupils were demanding of staff time, it was seen as a gesture of goodwill. Such funds can support an induction process which includes additional supervision from agencies concerned with behavioural support and modification and parental involvement. Other support for reintegrating excluded pupils might include allocating a special teacher-tutor and developing peer group mentoring schemes.

Length of fixed term exclusions

Since our interviews, the Education Act 1997 has extended the maximum period for a fixed term exclusion from a 15 day limit to 45 days

in any term. Although some LEA officers suggested that it was sometimes hard to resolve a case within the time previously allowed, all six headteachers of our good practice schools felt that 15 days was adequate. They suggested that a school which needed longer than this was failing in its duty to the child, and needed to tighten up its procedures, including its record-keeping. As one LEA interviewee pointed out, the quicker a child returned to mainstream schooling after exclusion, the greater the chances of the child reintegrating satisfactorily. Our LEA interviewees agreed that extending the limit for fixed term exclusions to 45 days in any term would cause unnecessary disruption and serve neither the best interests of the child nor the long-term interest of schools.

Appeals procedure

Although no headteacher likes to have his or her decision overturned by the governing body, and governing bodies expect their decisions to be backed by the LEA, headteachers in the case study schools recognised the need for an appeals procedure to protect the rights of parents and thus, indirectly, of the child. Most accepted the existing procedures (which tend to work in favour of schools, rather than excluded pupils). An Education Social Worker involved with exclusions suggested that parents might sometimes benefit from independent support at appeal hearings. He questioned whether a member of the Education Welfare Service, although there to represent the family, can be genuinely independent. Another LEA interviewee, while recognising the right of a family to seek legal support at an exclusions appeal, felt that the litigation process could increase the upset and damage to the child, and make it more difficult for him or her to be reintegrated into school. Those of our interviewees who argued for review of the appeal system wanted it improved to protect the best interests of the child, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children Act 1989, rather than to place schools at a greater advantage.

Training

Teachers in our six schools with low exclusion rates were broadly committed to equality principles, but few had any specific training in this area. Evidence from some of the LEA staff we interviewed suggests that the links between equality issues and issues such as behaviour management, special educational needs and whole school management are not currently being made, and that awareness of them needs to be raised.

Those providing training on 'exclusions' and behaviour management need to consider what an 'inclusive' school actually means. One aspect of this would be what its curriculum should include; another, how to promote a school ethos which does not harbour racism or racial harassment.

Acknowledging 'race' and ethnicity

Our research indicated an urgent need for LEAs to promote open discussion on behaviour issues, racial equality and a child's right to education in order for the high proportion of African Caribbean pupils excluded from school to be reversed. Without urgent acknowledgement of the part that issues of race and racism in schools may play in the processes leading to exclusion, it is possible that pupils from other ethnic minorities may also become more vulnerable to exclusion. In particular, attention needs to be given to those identified as 'Other' ethnic minority – particularly children of mixed ethnic origin.

8 CONCLUSIONS

MAIN FINDINGS

While the overall national and LEA data show that exclusion from schools is increasing, some schools have managed to keep exclusion of difficult pupils a rare event. Often, these schools have similar pupil intakes to, and are working in circumstances just as difficult as, nearby schools which have higher, and increasing, exclusion levels.

Our research in six schools with low or decreasing exclusion levels found that their minimal use of exclusions was not due to the adoption of a 'no exclusions' policy. The headteachers wanted to retain this option for exceptional circumstances, when all other strategies had failed. This reassured teachers and other pupils that their interests would be protected if a pupil persistently threatened the education of his or her peers or was a serious threat or danger to others.

Nor did the headteachers of our six case study schools support lengthening the 15 days per term limit on fixed term exclusions, feeling that longer exclusions were generally not in the long-term interests of either pupils or schools.

These good practice schools had, we found, adopted comprehensive policies on behaviour, pastoral care and the development of an inclusive curriculum. They tended to reduce exclusions equally for all ethnic groups. Four also had strategies for addressing the particular needs of groups overrepresented among excluded pupils, currently African Caribbean boys; these included mentoring and tutorial schemes and close liaison with black community groups. Our case study schools also recognised that equal opportunities policies and practices needed to be rigorously applied in all matters relating to pupil discipline and behaviour. Not all were equally confident in addressing issues of racial equality, and a number of teachers felt they needed guidance and training on this.

Our research identified a number of initiatives which local education authorities can take to reduce exclusions overall, and to tackle the disproportionate number of black pupils being excluded. These include careful data collection and analysis, with regular feedback to schools; support for black community-led initiatives to improve pupils' motivation and self-respect, and thus their school behaviour; and the development of comprehensive training packages for teachers, governors and administrators which would address issues of racial equality in relation to behavioural management and discipline.

Our evidence suggests that schools can reduce their use of exclusions if offered appropriate support and resources. Exclusions are inevitably costly: recent evidence confirms that provision for an excluded child, whose subsequent education is nearly always less adequate than in school, is far more expensive than maintaining that child in mainstream education (Parsons, 1996). Investment to help schools maintain low exclusion rates and to reintegrate pupils who have been excluded from another establishment would therefore be cost-effective. Our research suggests that, by adopting the good practice common to the schools with low exclusion rates that we studied, other schools can be helped, guided and supported to retain vulnerable pupils in mainstream classes, and reduce their own use of exclusion.

Teachers and headteachers who have succeeded in reducing, or maintaining low levels of, exclusion within their schools often feel they have done so against the odds, battling against the pressures of competition and market forces on schools. They recognise that action to reduce exclusion by schools, LEAs and through national educational policy needs to be backed up by other support from outside the educational realm for vulnerable children and their families.

9 GOOD PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

These recommendations are based on what our researchers found to be working well in case study schools with low exclusion rates. They cover a broad range of school activity, and this 'whole school' approach is a crucial aspect of their success. In considering how best to apply these recommendations, individual schools may find it helpful to select and concentrate on one area of activity to start with, and once that is working well, to move to the next stage. Overall, however, a strategy covering all areas of school activity should be developed.

School development plan

- Action to reduce the use of exclusion should be an integral part of the school development plan. It should cover the measures set out below.

Behaviour policy

Every school should have a behaviour policy, as outlined in DfEE circular 8/94. This should be supported by a clear behaviour code. The policy should include a disciplinary framework which ensures that exclusion, with the disruption, stigma and financial loss it brings, remains a last resort.

- The behaviour policy should be negotiated with staff and discussed with parents. Parents' views on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour should be canvassed, and pupils should feel that their views were taken into consideration in drawing it up.
- Pupils should be involved in drawing up a code of conduct which outlines principles of good behaviour and sets out the system of rewards for good behaviour and sanctions against unacceptable behaviour used at the school. Once drawn up, it should be prominently displayed in every classroom.
- A home-school contract, although not enforceable, can be useful. The process of drawing it up should help develop relationships between parents, teachers and pupils.

- Teachers can also work with pupils who are having problems, and their parents or carers, to draw up individual contracts to meet the children's needs.
- Training for pupils in 'peer mediation' skills, which help them to resolve conflicts among themselves, will be helpful.
- Teachers' investigations into misconduct must be thorough. They should not rely only on what other pupils say, and should investigate provocation and motivation on both sides.
- The behaviour policy should complement and reflect policies on equal opportunities and pastoral care.

Pastoral care

A pastoral care policy, covering measures to create a sense of well-being and of belonging to the school community, will contribute to good discipline. Pastoral care measures should include:

- An induction programme for new pupils, which should include discussing the school's behaviour code and its equal opportunity policy, and explaining what the school's ethos of inclusion, equality and achievement means for pupils in day-to-day life in school.
- Provision for pupils vulnerable to exclusion to select one of their teachers as a tutor who will give them additional support.
- Information on pupils identified as vulnerable to possible exclusion being passed to the local education authority at an early stage, so that appropriate support can be provided.
- Clear plans for reintegrating excluded pupils into school life.

Working with parents and carers

Teachers should recognise the value of cooperating with parents and other carers, and be open and honest with them. Strategies for involving them should include:

- Recognising good work and behaviour at school, for instance by giving pupils or award certificates to take home.
- Agreeing specific targets with parents or carers and the child, possibly as part of a home-school contract, to help the child realise his or her potential or to resolve problems.
- Inviting parents, carers, mentors or other adults into the classroom to support and help children during lessons.

- Letters, phone calls and invitations to attend school open days or evenings, to keep families informed about, and involved in, school events.
- Weekly or daily report cards, which both teachers and parents sign, can be used to monitor pupil behaviour and improve communication between home and school.
- Teachers should check that they are communicating effectively with ethnic minority parents, and with the parents of all children who have problems.
- If parents from any ethnic minority group are not keeping in contact with their children's teachers, a relevant community organisation may be able to advise on ways to improve communication.

Using community and support services effectively

- Schools should develop good working relationships with behaviour support services, social workers, and community and other organisations. This will enable schools to put families in need of support in contact with the relevant services.
- A register of information on relevant local agencies, including voluntary groups, should be compiled and maintained by the school.
- Mentoring programmes can match disaffected pupils with volunteers who act as role models, listen to, advise and help them. Mentors support pupils and provide sustained, often long-term, contact.
- In developing partnerships with ethnic minority and other community organisations, emphasis must be placed on constructive solutions, rather than on apportioning blame.

The curriculum

Increasing pressure on schools to achieve better results without additional resources has reduced the attention many schools give to developing a multicultural curriculum and exploring equality issues. The differences between schools in success rates for specific ethnic groups suggest that, often, the problem may lie in teaching that fails to engage and make the curriculum relevant to the range of pupils being taught.

- The link between engaging children's interest in lessons and avoiding disruptive behaviour should be recognised by staff. Good teaching means delivering the curriculum in ways that capture pupils' imaginations.

- Opportunities throughout the curriculum to draw on pupils' knowledge of their families' cultural heritage should be identified and included in teaching.
- Systematic assessment for extra tuition in basic numeracy and literacy, including English as a Second Language support, and providing it where needed, will improve pupil motivation and achievement.
- The Personal and Social Education curriculum should reinforce the pastoral and behaviour policies. It should help pupils understand and exercise the skills needed to handle disagreements with fellow pupils, teachers and others without resorting to or provoking aggression.
- The PSE curriculum should also help pupils to develop the skills needed to deal with racial harassment and make use of the school's equality policy.

Identifying Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Behaviour leading to exclusion, or consideration of exclusion, sometimes results from failure to address special educational needs.

- Headteachers should always consider whether disciplinary problems stem from unrecognised SEN before excluding any pupil.
- School-based support for pupils with SEN can include individual education plans, regular reviews, involving parents and an SEN coordinator, and appropriate specialist help.
- SEN assessments of pupils whose behaviour has been challenging could make clear recommendations for behaviour management. Headteachers should check that these recommendations are being followed, or whether they need modification, before resorting to exclusion.
- Exclusion will very seldom be appropriate for children who have SEN.

Equal opportunities policy and practice

All schools should have an equal opportunities policy which should include a commitment to racial equality. The policy can be a central element in developing an inclusive school ethos. It should be linked to the School Development Plan and cover all aspects of school life.

- A commitment that the school will work to eliminate racial or other disparities in the use of exclusion will be helpful.

- The policy should explicitly forbid racial harassment and name-calling. It should recognise that these may be more widespread in the school than teachers and other adults believe.
- The policy should contain a specific commitment that discipline will be fair, with similar treatment for all pupils in response to similar behaviour.
- A senior staff member should be given responsibility for ensuring that the equal opportunities policy is acted on in all aspects of school life.
- The policy should link monitoring for inequalities to a strategy for systematic review and, where necessary, change.
- Teachers should receive training on relevant aspects of equal opportunities good practice.
- Schools should actively seek to employ suitably qualified staff from ethnic minority groups at all levels.

Staff support and training

- Staff should receive training on dealing with confrontational and difficult behaviour, while encouraging mutual respect.
- They should also be trained to deal effectively with any incidents of racial harassment, including racist name-calling and insinuation.
- Training opportunities should be provided to help staff examine how racial stereotyping affects school life, and what part it may play in their own judgements.
- Teachers should be encouraged to share strategies for managing difficult behaviour, with all staff working as a team to support each other. Seeking help from colleagues should be encouraged.

Monitoring

- School record-keeping systems should include detailed information on disciplinary incidents, including both fixed term and permanent exclusions, by ethnic group.
- Data on pupils and teachers involved in incidents leading to exclusion should be analysed, to identify any patterns which might indicate that the school's policies or practices need to be changed.
- Records of excluded and other problem pupils should be monitored by social class, ethnic group and sex.

- Monitoring records should be analysed, and targets set, backed by action plans to redress any disparities identified.

The headteacher's role

Leadership from the headteacher and senior management team will be needed. The headteacher should:

- Ensure that disciplinary policy and action is appropriate, fair and consistent.
- Encourage and advocate an ethos of inclusion and equality of opportunity.
- Agree with the governing body realistic but challenging targets for year on year reduction in exclusion, and for reducing any over-representation of ethnic minorities among those excluded.
- Take the lead in developing a strategy for achieving these targets.
- Ensure staff receive the support they need to achieve these targets, such as INSET and other suitable training, and appropriate curriculum materials.
- Ensure that monitoring information is regularly considered by the governing body.
- Initiate or participate in networks, to study and find ways of reducing the level of exclusions.

School governors' responsibilities

- School governors should ensure that they receive clear information from their school's records on exclusions, both fixed term and permanent, including the ethnicity and sex of excluded pupils.
- A governors' subcommittee to oversee discipline and the use of exclusion in the school should be established.
- All governors should receive training on good practice in the use of exclusion. This should include discussion of racial equality issues, a briefing on the LEA's monitoring of exclusions, what involvement and information governors should expect, and what to look for in assessing their own school's record and procedures.
- Training for all governors on equal opportunities good practice in schools should similarly be ensured.
- School governors should be involved in the school's pastoral policy, and take part in meetings and discussions with pupils and their families or carers.

- Suitably experienced community members from ethnic minority groups should be encouraged to join governing bodies.
- Governors should ensure staffing resources allow capacity for teachers to pay attention to difficult pupils and those with special needs.

WHAT LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES CAN DO

Leadership

- The Chief Education Officer can adopt a personal performance target for reducing exclusion rates – or the rate of increase of exclusions – to show that it is important. Adopting a further target for reducing any racial overrepresentation among excluded pupils within the LEA would show that the racial equality aspect has similar priority.
- A senior manager should be responsible for taking an LEA-wide overview on exclusions. His or her brief should explicitly include identifying and tackling the causes of any racial disparity.
- The LEA should ensure sufficient staff and budgetary resources are allocated to services which help prevent exclusions.
- The LEA should be proactive in encouraging schools to tell it at the earliest stage about pupils at risk of exclusion, and in offering support and advice to the school, the pupils, and their families or carers.

Putting race and ethnicity back on the agenda

- LEAs should encourage schools to examine the racial equality implications of their policies on behaviour and discipline, and ensure that schools are taking action to reduce any ethnic disparities in achievement and in exclusions.
- LEAs should seek to ensure that schools' exclusions policies and practices do not lead to possible unlawful racial discrimination.
- LEAs should encourage schools to review their taught curriculum, to ensure that it encompasses relevant multicultural perspectives.
- Reducing the very high proportion of black boys among excluded pupils requires cooperation between agencies concerned with pupil welfare and support, those concerned with equal opportunities, and with ethnic minority community groups seeking to address their children's problems. LEAs should make contact with

appropriate existing multi-agency forums, and encourage schools to work with them. Where none exist, LEAs can take the initiative to bring together appropriate agencies and local schools to set up forums.

Helping schools reduce exclusions

- Schools with low or declining exclusion rates should be encouraged to share their experiences with other schools. For instance, a school with a high exclusion rate can be paired with a similar school that has a low exclusion rate.
- LEA advisory and inspectorate teams should be trained to help schools eliminate any overrepresentation of black pupils among exclusions.
- Groups of schools (eg, in a particular area) can be asked to collaborate in finding a new place for pupils excluded by other schools in the group.
- If any school accepts a significant number of pupils excluded by other schools, the LEA should arrange extra resources to help with their integration and support.
- In setting year-on-year targets for reducing exclusions and eliminating ethnic disparities, LEAs should involve schools in formulating the LEA-wide targets, encourage schools to establish their own targets, and monitor schools' success in meeting their targets.

Exclusions and appeals procedures

- All LEAs should publish a leaflet for distribution to parents of excluded children, giving detailed information about their rights and responsibilities, including relevant provisions of the Race Relations Act 1976.
- Families appealing against an exclusion should be directed to an agency which can provide them with independent support, advice and representation at the appeal hearing.

Supporting excluded pupils and their families

- Ways of working with community-led initiatives to address the disproportionate exclusion of particular ethnic groups should be explored. This could include supporting mentoring schemes for vulnerable pupils, and support groups for parents of excluded children, such as black parents' support groups.
- LEAs should liaise with social services departments to ensure that excluded pupils' families are offered appropriate support. LEAs

should similarly ensure that the needs of excluded children in local authority care are being met.

- LEAs should have a procedure, backed by necessary resources, for ensuring that excluded pupils are not left without adequate replacement education.

Monitoring

- LEAs can help schools to identify patterns and trends in exclusions by asking them to supply ethnic and sex monitoring data on both fixed term and permanent exclusions, and by analysing the data so that schools can see how they compare with each other.
- Analysis and monitoring of the data by the LEA can help schools identify any ethnic or other disparities which need to be addressed.
- The ethnic backgrounds of those identifying themselves under the 'Other' category in ethnic monitoring statistics should be investigated by the LEA, in order to understand and address their needs.

Training

- In-service training on behaviour management should include discussion of racism and racial harassment.
- It should also highlight the benefits of a genuinely inclusive school curriculum and ethos.
- LEA staff administering exclusions, and members of appeal panels, should be trained on equal opportunities issues.
- Training should also emphasise the importance of ensuring that disciplinary problems are not due to unassessed Special Educational Needs.

Inter-LEA cooperation

Inter-LEA cooperation can reinforce and share good practice between neighbouring LEAs.

- A regional forum or working group on exclusions will help to foster inter-LEA cooperation.
- This forum should also address the needs of pupils who live on the borders of an authority, or who live in one authority and go to school in another.

APPENDIX 1 ETHNIC DATA ON PERMANENT EXCLUSIONS, 1994/5

The tables below are reproduced by permission of the Department for Education and Employment.

Table A1.1: Permanent exclusions, by ethnic group and sex, 1994/5

Ethnic group	Boys	Girls
Unclassified	146	35
White	7286	1479
Black Caribbean	609	159
Black African	125	23
Black Other	150	32
Indian	92	6
Pakistani	197	11
Bangladeshi	40	6
Chinese	9	2
Other ethnic minority	195	46
Total	8849	1799

Table A1.2: Permanent exclusions, by ethnic group and SEN statement, 1994/5

Ethnicity	Statemented	Not Statemented	Unknown
Unclassified	32	134	15
White	1520	6776	489
Black Caribbean	103	606	60
Black African	15	113	20
Black Other	34	125	23
Indian	4	89	5
Pakistani	8	187	13
Bangladeshi	6	38	2
Chinese	0	10	1
Other Ethnic Group	42	179	20

Table A1.3. Permanent exclusions, by ethnic group and school type, 1994/5

Ethnicity	Primary	Secondary	Special
Unclassified	36	140	5
White	1072	7298	415
Black Caribbean	97	642	30
Black African	27	115	6
Black Other	27	142	13
Indian	4	92	2
Pakistani	6	200	2
Bangladeshi	0	45	1
Chinese	0	11	0
Other Ethnic Group	38	185	18
Total	1307	8870	492

Table A1.4: Permanent exclusions, by ethnic group and school status, 1994/95

	Primary & secondary			Special
Ethnicity	County & voluntary controlled	Voluntary aided & special agreement	Grant-maintained	LEA, non LEA and grant-maintained
Unclassified	158	10	8	5
White	6337	722	1311	415
Black Caribbean	490	105	144	30
Black African	80	27	35	6
Black Other	116	29	24	13
Indian	76	4	16	2
Pakistani	179	1	26	2
Bangladeshi	39	2	4	1
Chinese	5	3	3	0
Other Ethnic Group	155	25	43	18
Total	7635	928	1614	492

Table A1.5: Permanent exclusions, by age and ethnic group, 1994/5(1) (2)

Age*	White	Black Caribbean	Black African	Black Other	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Chinese	Other	Unclassified
4	19	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
5	75	5	2	1	1	1	0	0	2	1
6	91	13	2	2	0	0	0	0	5	5
7	124	6	5	5	1	1	0	0	6	5
8	184	21	5	6	0	0	0	0	5	7
9	254	21	6	10	2	2	0	0	15	7
10	324	24	5	4	0	3	0	0	8	22
11	540	56	11	19	4	9	2	0	12	8
12	964	106	16	24	9	16	6	1	31	18
13	1697	165	26	36	20	37	10	1	51	40
14	2528	198	40	47	33	74	17	4	59	40
15	1798	124	22	21	24	49	9	3	40	22
16	150	18	5	6	3	14	2	0	4	1
17	11	2	0	0	1	1	0	2	2	0
18	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

* Age at 31 August 1994. In a small number of cases, not included here, the ages of excluded pupils were not known.

Table A1.6: Distribution of permanent exclusions, by size of school, 1994/5*

Permanent Exclusions	Size of School (by headcount of pupils)									
	0-200	201-400	401-600	601-800	801-1000	1001-1200	1201-1400	1401-1600	1601-1800	1801+
0	8826	8826	1713	327	213	139	76	33	12	2
1-2	461	777	358	268	249	189	103	47	15	4
3-4	41	32	94	135	159	115	53	23	7	7
5-6	9	12	58	84	89	61	31	14	8	0
7-8	3	3	24	41	40	32	15	9	4	0
9-10	0	2	15	14	26	14	7	2	2	0
11-12	0	1	7	9	8	8	2	2	3	1
13-14	0	0	2	5	3	2	3	1	1	0
15-16	0	0	3	6	2	3	2	0	2	1
17+	0	0	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	0

*A very small number of schools with exclusions are not recorded, as information on the size of the school was not available

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